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ABSTRACT

A study examined curriculum decision-making in the classrooms of accomplished teachers of English in grades 9 through 12, focusing on aspects of structure, content, and ways of knowing and doing that combined to create a sense of a "curriculum" rather than a series of disconnected lessons. Four classrooms were studied each semester for two years at two high schools, one in New York State and the other in New Jersey. Selection of participants emphasized diversity rather than representativeness. Data included interviews with teachers and students, classroom observations, and institutional and classroom artifacts. Results indicated that (1) the establishment of a set of conventions for what was appropriate to discuss and how discussion would be carried out was a critical first step in creating a sense of coherence and purpose within the literature classroom; (2) such coherence existed in all classrooms examined; (3) another layer of coherence and a sense of direction was established in some classrooms, in which experiences that came later in the curriculum were informed by those that came earlier and which led to a rethinking and reshaping of earlier experiences; (4) teachers varied from class to class in the extent to which they planned their curriculum around relationships within a larger conversational domain; and (5) students' engagement was highest and their perceived understanding of the domain was greatest when domain structure and discussion conventions worked together to support students' entry into significant conversations about interesting issues. (Three tables of data and questions on the student interview schedules are attached. Contains 29 references.) (RS)

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SHAPING CONVERSATIONS: A STUDY OF CONTINUITY AND COHERENCE IN HIGH SCHOOL LITERATURE CURRICULA

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Shaping Conversations: A Study of Continuity and Coherence in High School Literature Curricula

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Overview

This report presents the findings of a two-year study of curriculum decision-making in the classrooms of accomplished teachers of English in Grades 9 through 12. The study focused on the mechanisms that provided these teachers and their students with a sense of continuity and coherence within the work they undertook-- the aspects of structure, content, and ways of knowing and doing that combined to create a sense of a "curriculum" rather than of a series of disconnected lessons.

The study was located at two school sites, one in New York and one in New Jersey. Both schools served multiethnic communities, and both had sizeable proportions of poor and of ethnic minority populations. During the two years, case studies were developed of 19 classes (representing 32 semesters) taught by 8 teachers. These classes represented different grade levels, different definitions of the subject matter of English in general and literature in particular, and different grouping practices. Classrooms were chosen to highlight contrasts in curriculum between classes taught by the same teacher, as well as among teachers.

The present report summarizes major findings within a framework that draws upon the concept of "curricular conversations" (Applebee, 1993, 1994) as a way to conceptualize curriculum within a constructivist pedagogy. In particular, it examines the ways in which the conventions teachers establish for discussing the domain of literature and their decisions about how to structure the conversational domain provide teachers and students with a sense of curricular coherence and continuity over the course of the semester or year.

Background

The past two decades have been a period of rapid change in conceptions of schooling and approaches to instruction. Concern with basic skills and essential content has given way to concern for the development of "thoughtfulness" (Brown, 1991) and independent thinking abilities. Within the teaching of English, proposals for reform have focused on the provision of more open-ended teaching activities, on student-centered instruction, and on the development of process skills rather than on memorization of specific content (Applebee & Purves, 1992; Langer & Allington, 1992).

A rethinking of instructional activities, however, has not been accompanied by a parallel rethinking of curriculum. In particular, there has been little attention to how to insure that the individual activities will accumulate into a coherent whole, or indeed of what that "whole" might represent. Curriculum building in the English language arts has remained a practical activity, usually entailing the development of scope and sequence charts or content frameworks of varying degrees of detail. However well intended, such approaches to curriculum implicitly define the goals of English in terms of specific content, and tend to work against recent reforms stressing process-oriented language skills and strategies. In reaction, many reform-minded teachers have rejected attempts to specify the curriculum at all, relying instead upon vignettes of successful practice. (See, for example, the report of the English Coalition Conference: Lloyd-Jones and Lunsford, 1989.) Alternatively, they have resorted to broad philosophical statements that provide little guidance to day-to-day decisions about what to teach (e.g., California State Department of Education, 1987).

Experienced teachers do, however, develop a sense of coherence and continuity within their classrooms. It is this sense of direction that helps them decide what to do next, given the almost limitless set of possibilities within the domain of English instruction. It is also this sense of direction which gives both teachers and students a sense of progress and accomplishment as a course develops.

The present study sought to articulate the factors underlying accomplished teachers' decisions about curriculum. What factors govern their choices of what to do next with their classes? What are the constraints and possibilities they see? Can the tacit knowledge of accomplished teachers--the regularities underlying their curricular decision-making--be articulated in ways that will more effectively explain their curriculum to parents and administrators, as well as to less experienced teachers who are still trying to find their way?

Curriculum as a Domain for Conversation

As we became immersed in the detail of individual classrooms in the present study, we began to think of the curriculum as a domain for culturally significant conversation (see Applebee, 1993, 1994) among students, teachers, and texts of all sorts. This framework has a somewhat curious status within the study, as both a result of the research and a way of making sense of what we were doing. It arose out of an ongoing interaction between the detailed observations of teachers' decision-making and broader theories of language use and language learning. The study provides a context within which to examine the kinds of insight this view of curriculum can provide into teachers' and students' experiences. It also provides a context for examining the factors that furthered or hindered the development of coherent and engaging curricular conversations.

So, what is entailed in a view of curriculum as a domain for culturally significant conversations into which we want our students to be able to enter (Applebee, 1993, 1994)? In school, those conversations are most often disciplinary, set within the traditional boundaries of school subjects (language arts, science, history, math, the arts), but they can be inter- or cross-disciplinary, drawing on texts and concepts from a variety of fields (as happens, for example, in environmental studies). This sense of education as helping students enter into an ongoing cultural conversation is an old one, though it has typically been presented as a passing metaphor rather than taken seriously as a way to think about the curriculum (see, for example, Burke, 1941, pp 110-111). Gerald Graff makes typical use of this metaphor in his comments in Beyond the Culture Wars (1992):

> In short, reading books with comprehension, making arguments, writing papers, and making comments in a class discussion are social activities. They involve entering into a cultural or disciplinary conversation, a process not unlike initiation into a social club. (77)

As language arts teachers, the "literacy club" is usually at the center of our concern, though by high school this may be differentiated into separate and only sometimes interrelated emphases on literature, composition, and language study.

A curriculum that is viewed as a conversational domain is inherently interactional: it includes the content knowledge emphasized in older versions of curriculum, but insists that such content is of interest for the conversation--oral and written (or carried out in other media)--that it evokes. Because the conversations that are embodied in the school curriculum are themselves embedded in larger universes of discourse, as students learn to enter into them they also are learning the larger "rules of the game"--the ways of knowing and doing that characterize the

larger conversation. They learn, for example, what counts as effective argument and evidence in science and history and literature. These are traditional goals (captured in such phrases as learning "scientific method" or "historical perspective"), but they are goals that have usually been overwhelmed in practice by the curricular focus on the accompanying specific content (Langer, 1992b).

It is the teacher's often tacit sense of what a conversation is about that shapes the curriculum in both its broader and narrower dimensions. At the broader level, it guides the selection of readings, writing assignments, and other activities for a particular class; at the narrower, it leads a teacher to encourage some kinds of comments in writing or class discussion, and to discourage others. An activity as straightforward as reading a story to a class of kindergartners may look radically different depending upon the conversation within which the teacher chooses to embed it (Martinez & Teale, 1993).

Conversations are not always tidy. They include false starts and dead ends, promising possibilities that end up leading nowhere. This may be particularly so in the day-to-day interaction of the classroom, where the most productive learning environments are likely to entail risk-taking as students explore new ideas and new ways of expressing them. In our analyses, we treat classroom discussions and interactions as parts of the larger conversations within which they are embedded--curricular conversations carried out over a semester or a year, which are themselves embedded within even larger disciplinary or cultural conversations taking place in the world beyond the classroom. It is these larger conversations which students are learning to enter, and which give a sense of direction and purpose to the temporary incoherence that may at times arise in day-to-day interaction.

The Study

The study was concerned with curricular decision-making as it evolved over relatively long periods of time--the unit, semester, and year as a whole. The focus was on decisions about what to teach, both in the sense of the selections chosen for study and in the sense of the kinds of knowledge that students were expected to derive from the study of particular selections. Data-gathering sought to understand the personal and institutional contexts within which curricular decisions were made, the concerns that shaped the decisions, and the consequences of the decisions in the context of particular classrooms. Data included interviews with teachers and students, classroom observations, and analysis of institutional and classroom artifacts (curriculum guides, departmental book lists, examinations, and samples of student work). Each classroom was

treated as a case study, with ongoing analyses of patterns in curricular decision-making within and across cases.

In addition to the teachers at each site, the research team included the project director and two field workers, one at each site.[1] Weekly project meetings involving the project director and the two field workers were used to coordinate data collection and analysis across sites, and to share work in progress.

The Sites

The study was based at two high schools, one in New York State and the other in New Jersey. Both schools had multicultural student populations, and both served communities with a substantial number of families living in poverty. Four classrooms were studied each semester at each site, chosen to provide contrasts within and between teachers and grade levels. Selection of participants emphasized diversity rather than representativeness. The 19 classrooms, representing 32 semesters of English teaching, are summarized in Table 1.

Riverhill High School

Riverhill, New Jersey, is a suburban community located within a 15-mile radius of New York City. It is a commuter town, served by two rail lines and three bus routes into New York City. Most residents live within two miles of one of the town's five train stations. Most of the home-buying residents moving into Riverhill are young professionals who work in New York City, according to the local Riverhill paper.

Riverhill has both wealth and poverty. The median household income is $42,150, not much greater than the New Jersey household median income of $40,900, according to 1990 U.S. census data. Fourteen percent of school age children qualify for free lunches. But home values tell a different story. The median home value is $271,700, compared to the state median of $162,300. Moreover, taxes are high, largely because the town has no industry to tax. Homeowners, therefore, must assume the lion's share of the burden of school and municipal budgets. A typical tax bill for a Riverhill homeowner with a $250,000 assessed value is $7,100 per year.

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[1] Burroughs was responsible for data collection and analysis at the New Jersey site, Stevens for data collection and analysis at the New York site.

Table 1. The Case Study Classrooms

Class	Teacher	Topic	Grade	Track	Year	Size
		Riverhill High School				
1	Tony Harrison	American Literature (1 semester)	10	Upper	1991-92	28
2	Tony Harrison	British Literature (1 semester)	10	Upper	1991-92	28
3	Tony Harrison	American Literature (1 semester)	10	Upper	1992-93	31
4	Tony Harrison	British Literature (1 semester)	10	Upper	1992-93	31
5	Tony Harrison	English (2 semesters)	9	Lower	1991-92	20
6	Tony Harrison	English (2 semesters)	9	Lower	1992-93	14
7	Cheryl James	Humanities (2 semesters)	11/12	Middle	1991-92	16
8	Cheryl James	Advanced Placement (2 semesters)	12	Upper	1991-92	24
9	Claudia Callahan	British Literature (1 semester)	11/12	Middle	1992-93	24
10	Claudia Callahan	Contemporary Literature (1 semester)	11/12	Middle	1992-93	26
11	Emily French	World Cultures (2 semesters)	9	Mixed	1992-93	29
		Lexington High School				
12	Zach Williams	Patterns of Culture (2 semesters)	9	Upper	1991-92	24
13	Zach Williams	English (2 semesters)	9	Lower	1991-92	24
14	Jean Hutchinson	English (2 semesters)	9	Middle	1992-93	25
15	Jean Hutchinson	English (2 semesters)	10	Upper	1991-92	21
16	Jean Hutchinson	English (2 semesters)	10	Lower	1992-93	13
17	Jean Hutchinson	English (2 semesters)	12	Middle	1991-92	25
18	Jackie Grant/ Margo Morrison	English (2 semesters)	9	Lower	1992-93	24
19	Jackie Grant	English (2 semesters)	9	Upper	1992-93	27

Riverhill has a minority population of about 34%, according to census figures. Most of the minority population is African American (31%), with a small proportion of Asian (2%) and others (1%). Minority residents, however, tend to be concentrated in the south side of town.

More than half of a property owner's tax bill goes to support the Riverhill Unified School District. Residents feel they are buying two things with their tax dollars: quality education and integration. Integration is achieved through an elaborate magnet school system designed to counter the town's de facto geographic segregation. Riverhill school officials make it difficult for parents to send their children to their neighborhood schools by placing quotas on neighborhood residents, and a voluntary busing program provides transportation to and from schools for every student in the district to every school in the district. The result is a well-integrated school district, especially at the elementary level. At the high school level, however, the picture changes. There African Americans account for almost 50% of the student body (white, 43%; Hispanic 5%; Asian 4%, other less than 1%), and English courses appear to be segregated along racial lines. Minority students are greatly outnumbered by whites in top-level honors courses; minority students greatly outnumber whites in lower-level classes.

Lexington High School

Lexington High School is located in Delamont, a city in the upper-Hudson region of eastern New York. For much of this century it was a major industrial center, with a large and stable population of factory workers, and an affluent managerial class. Delamont's 1990 census count of 65,500 reflects a 16% loss in population over the last twenty years, however, a result of plant closings and division relocations by its major industrial employer. The once burgeoning downtown shopping district is largely vacant and in need of renewal. An influx of drugs and street violence has become a serious concern. Like many such cities in the Northeast, Delamont is beset with social and economic problems. Yet, commitment and a sense of community can still be found in the citizen groups that have organized to find solutions to Delamont's problems. It is a city determined to regenerate itself.

Delamont's population is not affluent. Census figures list median household income at $24,316, and median house value at $82,100. The assessed values of 92% of the private residences in the city are under $125,000. Rental units also reflect the modest means of Delamont's citizens. The median rent is $346, and most rental units are flats in 2- to 4- family houses built in the early 1900s. There are also several large low-income housing projects in the city. Twenty-eight percent of school age children (5 to 17 year olds) are classified as living below poverty level, and 37% come from single parent households.

Taxes are high, but property values are not; therefore money to run the city is short. About 47% of the taxes collected by Delamont go to its schools. The school budget is very tight and professional resources lag behind those of wealthier districts. Teachers of all subjects are responsible for monitoring a study hall in addition to their teaching load of 5 classes. This leaves one 52-minute preparation period per day. Texts and materials are limited and often worn and outdated. Restrictions on support services such as photocopying discourage teachers from using alternative materials on any regular basis.

In order to adjust to demographic changes, the district has been undergoing a reorganization process in recent years. Thirteen percent of the population is comprised of racial minorities, who reside mostly in the inner city neighborhoods. Three of the more racially imbalanced elementary schools have been turned into magnet schools in an effort to attract students from other neighborhoods. In addition, the district's two high schools (Lexington and West Park) were consolidated at Lexington High School after the first year of our study.

During our first year at Lexington, it served that half of the city distinguished by fine old homes and tree-lined, residential streets. It was the newer and larger of the two schools, housing 1100 students, 87% of whom were white. West Park High School, on the other hand, served a district comprised of mostly inner city, poorer, and older neighborhoods. About 66% of its students were white. The student body of the combined high school at Lexington during the second year of our study consisted of 79% white students, 15% African American, 3% Hispanic, and 3% students of Asian, Native American, or Middle Eastern backgrounds.

The merging of the two schools was an effort not only to be more cost efficient, but also to create a more integrated high school. Nevertheless, tracking continued to separate students along racial and class lines. Students from minority and disadvantaged backgrounds remained underrepresented in college preparatory classes and overrepresented in lower track classes.

Student Informants

Within each classroom, student volunteers were asked to participate in interviews that explored their perceptions of the course: what they were learning, how various topics related to one another, what it took to do well, and the overall "sense" they were making of the course. Teacher rankings were used to select students who were doing relatively well as well as students who were doing relatively poorly in each course. Over the course of the study, we interviewed 32 students at Riverhill and 34 at Lexington. A copy of the interview schedule is included in appendix 1.

Case Study Teachers

We studied four classes at each site each semester, chosen to present contrasts within and between teachers, grade levels, and tracks. We asked for volunteers from among accomplished, experienced teachers of English nominated by their colleagues and supervisors, and made final selections each year after a round of initial interviews and classroom observations. Teachers were viewed as collaborators in our attempts to understand the processes at work in creating a sense of continuity and coherence within individual classrooms. The university-based field worker at each site (Burroughs at Riverhill, Stevens at Lexington) developed individual working relationships with the teachers they studied, developing a pattern of formal and informal interviews, classroom observations, and telephone updates tailored to the teaching schedules and preferences of each of the teachers.

Background interviews early in each course focused on the teacher's education and previous experience, goals for the course, and materials available. Planning and debriefing interviews throughout each semester tracked each teacher's evolving decision-making about what to teach, when, and why. Final interviews invited reflection over the semester as a whole, including highpoints, detours, disappointments, and changes that might be made in the following semester. In addition to general tracking of the evolution of the curriculum, at least one unit (of anywhere from two to four weeks duration) in each course was studied intensively, with almost daily observations and debriefings with the teacher.

The eight teachers whom we studied are discussed in some detail in the following sections, because it is out of their knowledge and experience that we have constructed the models of curriculum presented in this report. Chosen for their diverse perspectives rather than for representativeness, all eight were master teachers who shared their classrooms and discussed their curriculum with us over extended periods of time. Discussion of findings follows the portraits of the individual teachers. (Individual teachers, students, and schools are identified by pseudonyms throughout this report.)

The Teachers: Riverhill

Tony Harrison

At the time of the study, Tony Harrison was a 22-year veteran of public and private school teaching. An Ivy League graduate and VISTA volunteer, Harrison began teaching in a New Jersey Catholic school. He had been part of the English department at Riverhill for 11 years, teaching primarily students "with basic skills problems," as he put it. In the previous two years,

Tony had begun to teach two honors classes: a traditional sophomore honors class and an experimental freshman honors class for what Riverhill calls "high ability, low achievement" students. In addition to these two honors classes, Tony taught two sections of "SAT Preparation" to 12th-graders at what Riverhill calls the "regular" level.

Tony believed he had begun his teaching career unprepared because he had not taken education courses in college. He got his first job as a result of a teacher shortage. During the next five years, Tony took 30 units of education and teacher-training courses, but never felt comfortable with them: "I found that the courses did not apply to the reality of my classroom." He felt the courses did not address the "basic skills" students he was teaching.

Not only did Tony feel unprepared to teach, he felt particularly unprepared to teach English--a feeling that continued to haunt his teaching on many different levels. He majored in sociology rather than English, and admitted feeling at a disadvantage because of that. When he first began to teach literature in the Catholic high school, he had not read most of the books in his course curriculum.

Just as his knowledge and teaching skills grew with experience, so did his knowledge of curriculum. For the first 10 years of Catholic school teaching, he taught out of the textbook that he was given. At Riverhill, the idea of choosing his own books was foreign and at first he was uncomfortable with it.

The curriculum issue became acute with the arrival of a new chairperson, Emily French, eight years previously. Emily was a proponent of using multicultural literature in all English courses at Riverhill. She began to exhort Riverhill teachers to rely less on textbooks and to choose individual books, many by minority and women authors. Today, "multicultural is a major influence at Riverhill because of the chair and because of the diversity of the student body," Tony reported.

In his attempts to broaden the curriculum, Tony participated in a Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED) seminar. SEED is a national educational project based at the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women. The project establishes teacher-led faculty development seminars by sponsoring K-12 teachers to hold year-long reading groups. Run by department chair French, this seminar gathered teachers once a week for three hours to discuss literature by minority and women authors. "I was the only male [in the seminar], so I got to experience the minority perspective," Tony said.

That seminar was the greatest force in driving him to change his curriculum. From some of the discussion in that seminar, he fashioned lectures for his courses. He taught some of the books they read in the seminar, like The Joy Luck Club. And he taught a whole unit on the work of Gordon Parks, which also came out of that seminar.

The drive to include multicultural literature, however, placed Tony in a bind. He felt uneasy about crowding out the "classics." Mainly, this was a function of the disadvantage he felt at not being an English major. Because he was not trained as an English major the question of the curriculum was a constant one for him: "Who chooses the literature that makes up the curriculum?" he asked. "What is it about The Scarlet Letter or Billy Budd that makes it essential, that they could not get elsewhere?"

Yet, he felt his students needed to study the classics because they were going on to college and there is a body of knowledge that colleges expect them to have. Exacerbating the split were the Riverhill parents. Tony felt that parents, especially the parents of the predominately white students in his honors classes, expected a traditional curriculum. As he restructured the curriculum in these courses, he felt the gaze of Riverhill parents looking over his shoulder.

Cheryl James

Cheryl James had been teaching literature (and some French) for almost 36 years, the last 31 at Riverhill High School. She occasionally taught summer courses at one of the county colleges, and she was an adjunct professor at the local state college. She was recognized by her colleagues and department head as an outstanding teacher. In 1989, she received a Princeton Award from Princeton University as one of the year's best high school teachers in New Jersey.

As a student herself at Riverhill, Cheryl was the only African American student in the advanced English courses--although Riverhill had a sizeable African American population even then. "Riverhill has always been a wealthy bedroom community and many blacks living in the town worked as servants in the homes of the wealthy," she explained. Yet, within this sizable African American community, Cheryl felt isolated as a good student, separated from her black peers and her white classmates.

Unlike Tony, Cheryl came to teaching with a lengthy background in literature. Cheryl graduated from college with a double major in English and French. She enrolled in an MA program in a midwestern university, but did not complete the degree. She went overseas, eventually working as an interpreter for French and Belgian troops during the Korean War. When she returned to the United States, she enrolled in an MA program at Columbia. She stressed that

it was with "the faculty of philosophy, not the Teachers College," adding "It was a big deal back then." She completed the MA, writing her thesis on sixteenth-century English literature. She did further graduate work, completing everything but her dissertation in English literature. She is one of several co-editors of an anthology of contemporary Russian and American short stories and poetry, published by a major U.S. publisher.

She believed that her English literature course work and training was the greatest influence on her literature teaching. Her undergraduate courses gave her the breadth of subject that she found useful as a teacher. She was still teaching some of the French writers that she first encountered as an undergraduate: Voltaire, Dumas, and Moliere.

What an author "has to say to youngsters" was central to Cheryl's philosophy of teaching literature. Literature, she said, "helps students to interpret and understand their lives as they are and will be." She thought of herself as "building a bridge from high school to college" (as perhaps her own high school experience did not). "I'm concerned that I have something to say to them [about going out into the world], and I say it with literature."

Although the ideas expressed in the literature were paramount to Cheryl's philosophy, the process of analysis was also important to her. She said she was teaching her students to analyze literature, "For example, by analyzing an author's style, you can interpret his ideas." But even here the analysis was a secondary goal. By learning to analyze literature, "students can learn to analyze their own lives," Cheryl explained. "They are able to live a life, but also able to stand back and look at it."

The application of literature to the lives of her students was also reflected in her thoughts on the literature canon. She began, she said, by teaching a Humanities course to lower ability students and she found that students could succeed reading all kinds of literature. "There is not one group that needs to read literature and there is not one literature for all groups."

Despite this ecumenical attitude, Cheryl felt pressure from the Riverhill parents, just as Tony did. In the focal courses for the present study, Cheryl felt that parents had expectations of "what a good course is: you won't teach any old thing." Parents expected challenging literature. Did that mean classics? "Not necessarily," she said, though in fact her booklist was weighted toward the traditional and the classic.

Claudia Callahan

Claudia had been teaching for 17 years at the time of the study, the last 9 of which had been at Riverhill. She began her teaching career at a small secondary school (grades 7-12) in upstate New York, where she taught English for 3 years. From there she went to teach at a middle school in northern New Jersey. Then she left teaching. She went to work first for a book publisher and then for a clothing manufacturer. After several years of other work, she returned to teaching, saying it "was what I was meant to do."

Her reentrance to the field was through a master's program in teaching English at an Ivy League university. Coming off her years working outside of schools, Claudia felt particularly at home back in school. "I felt welcome," she said of this program. From that master's program she came straight to Riverhill, where she had been ever since. Her teaching schedule was two sections of Senior English AP, one section of semester courses (British Literature in the fall, Contemporary Literature in the spring), and one section of ninth grade honors. She also taught ESL courses at the local state college.

Claudia's philosophy of education was molded to a great extent by her education in English classes. She had an undergraduate degree in Education with a major in English. She said that she "had certain outstanding, marvelous professors and I still pull from that; for example The Cherry Orchard." When asked if she taught this text in the ways that her professor had, she replied: "I probably do my own thing with it, but he created a love or need for that play." By contrast she said that "nothing useful came from the education courses because there was so much theory that was unreal." Her master's-in-teaching-English program she found "wonderful" because it was able to bridge the theory and practice gap. "As we were reading and discussing [American Literature], we were also talking about how to teach it."

What Claudia described is a very text-based education, and not surprisingly her philosophy of teaching and curriculum reflected that text-based approach. She was careful to pick what she considered to be great literature, especially in her British Literature courses. She was wary of "all the calls for multiculturalism" that might result in "abruptly" dropping "all the material that most of us have been trained in and that is still valuable." For example, she thought "everybody should be exposed to Shakespeare." Her personal preference was for British literature and she believed that a good overview of British Literature was important "because like it or not and whether it is in terms of multiculturalism or not, it is the language that we speak and the literature is the base." In British literature, rather than find new texts, "What I think we need to do is look at different ways of presenting" the classic texts. "I try to make the themes and issues

relevant in today's world," she said, but she also made sure "to cover a lot of the basics, the standard texts."

Claudia found it easier to bring multicultural literature into her Contemporary Literature class. There she used texts by authors from a variety of cultures. Women were also in great abundance on the syllabus, while they were almost absent from the British Literature reading list. Part of her willingness to include more multicultural literature in this class stemmed from a difference in goals. In the Contemporary Literature class she thought of her goals as "raising awareness of the issues" of our times and presented literature she thought students would enjoy and relate to. This was significantly different from the British Literature course, which was historical and hence required the inclusion of some texts from each period.

Emily French

The English department chair, Dr. Emily French, was the guiding force behind the push at Riverhill for inclusion of multicultural literature in the English curriculum at all grades and for all levels. French had 32 years of teaching experience, 19 of them in the Riverhill school district, teaching middle school and high school English.

She came to the high school as department chair about eight years before the study began, as a result of her work revamping the district's junior high curriculum. When she learned that much of the chairperson's job at the high school would involve curriculum development, she agreed to take the job. Her first attempts to implement a revised high school curriculum did not go well. "There was a gap between our curriculum review and revision and implementation. There was no training."

As a result of that first foray into curriculum implementation, Emily began again more slowly. She brought in consultants and bought more trade books by multicultural authors. She instituted the SEED group that both Claudia and Tony joined. She let people work at their own pace in adding more multicultural literature. Her doctoral dissertation was on the topic of implementing change in schools.

French described her approach to education as one of learning how people "come to know in context." Lists of concepts to be learned were not important to her. "How one teaches the texts and the context in which the books are taught" were more meaningful considerations. The most meaningful context was one in which the "students see themselves mirrored in the curriculum." In a school like Riverhill, with a high minority population, that meant lots of books authored by minorities.

French believed that when students find their concerns mirrored in the curriculum, they are more likely "to find their [own] voices." Hence, she used a variety of teaching methods that gave students a voice in the classroom. Cooperative learning groups, writing journals, and group and individual projects were all meant to give students "ways of knowing in context."

The Teachers: Lexington

Zach Williams

In college Zach carried a double major in Theater and English and a minor in Education. Zach said that he decided to become a teacher because it was more realistic than trying to make a living at acting, and the theater did not fit his personal need for stability. He reasoned that being an English teacher would be a way to get paid for reading and discussing literature, something he had always loved. It was a fortuitous choice, in more ways than he anticipated. Zach explained:

> I really like being around kids this age--in English, in Theater, and in coaching [he was the assistant football coach]. That's become important. If I were not an English teacher now I probably would teach something else. Because I like being here. (interview, 10/24, year 1)

Zach was a popular teacher with the students and his colleagues; the year before the study began he won Lexington's Teacher of the Year award.

Zach was in his seventh year of teaching when the study began, all but one semester at Lexington. Since he had begun teaching, Zach had taken courses at the university and earned a master's degree in Liberal Studies.

Zach, who directed the drama club, taught two theater arts courses as well as ninth-grade English. The theater courses were heterogeneous across grades and ability levels, but students were grouped by ability for the grade-specific English courses, an arrangement Zach disliked. Zach taught one college-prep-level section (9-1) and two sections of the "lows" (9-3). His goals were essentially the same for both classes--reading skills, writing skills, personal development:

> I want kids to be able to read and understand it. I want kids to be able to write clearly and be understood. I want them to develop identities and into healthy human beings who have a chance to be happy as adults, who can identify what they want and how to go about pursuing it. I want that for the 9-1s and for the 9-3s. (interview, 11/8, year 1)

Zach assigned mostly literature-based writing, and tried to connect grammar, usage, vocabulary, and structures of writing to the literature. In talking about his teaching, he used a contemporary professional vocabulary--"process approaches," "journaling," "response-based approaches to literature," and "whole language." But he credited his knowledge to his on-the-job training, not to his teacher preparation. He further explained that when he first started teaching, he lectured, but through experience and observation and by being open to the suggestions of colleagues, he learned that students

> have to be doing more, I have to be doing less. ... When I first started teaching and I wasn't doing a very effective job, it was more performing. But now it's more stepping out of the way. Setting up the correct circumstances and then getting out of the way. And the art is in setting things up. (interview, 10/24, year 1)

Football coaching was another influence on Zach's development as a teacher. He said that coaching had helped shape his hold on the mechanics of teaching. How he organized and planned for a class session paralleled how he planned for and ran a football practice session. Broken down into time spans, he decided on a list of "activities," each with a specific objective. The plan for the day, thus, would have an overarching objective, but each session always served multiple purposes. Some activities were geared toward individual skill-building, others required more complex interaction among the students. The sessions opened up with warm-ups and ended with a motivational exercise to send the students home on a positive note. Where his approach in the classroom differed from his approach on the field was in the degree of flexibility he tried to build into his lesson plans. Whereas his coaching agenda was largely set, his lessons were more flexible. Zach remarked that he even hoped that the students would take the class discussion someplace he had not prearranged.

Jean Hutchinson

When Jean Hutchinson graduated in 1964 from a large midwestern university, she felt she was well-prepared to be an English teacher. She had majored in English and Psychology, and minored in Education. During her semester of student teaching, she had spent mornings at a junior high and afternoons at a senior high. She considered this dual experience invaluable because it helped her realize that there were different models of teaching.

After three years of teaching in her home state, Jean moved to Delamont and was hired to teach at West Park, one of the city's two high schools, and was later assigned to one of the district's middle schools. She earned a master's in American Studies at a local liberal arts college,

going on from there to take advanced courses at the nearby state university, this time in curriculum and instruction. While there, she became a part of the Teacher Corps.

Jean counted her six years with the Teacher Corps as the most influential of her career. Trained in models of teaching by Bruce Joyce and Marsha Weil, Jean became 1 of 22 people designated as a "National Trainer of Trainers in Models of Teaching." Collaborating with university faculty, she worked in various roles, from supervising interns to creating teacher development programs. When money for the Teacher Corps ran out, Jean resumed her teaching--first at West Park for five years, then at Lexington.

Jean placed her emphasis more on "teaching people than [on] teaching subject matter," a priority she attributed to her junior high/high school mixed experiences. "That is more of a younger grade approach," she explained (interview, 11/5, year 1). She believed that literature should have an impact on people's lives, and she worked hard to see that this happened for her students. Jean believed that "whatever happens in a literary work, there are similar situations in people's lives," yet she admitted that

> in many cases, it doesn't seem to impact on [the students]. There's not really any recognition of the significance of things unless they are pushed. I push. (interview, 11/7, year 1)

Lexington's English program centered on literature, but the school had a limited selection of texts and Jean accepted that there was not much she could do about the books to be read. Consequently, she focused her planning on instructional activities. Here is where she seemed to derive her sense of being a good teacher. Most of these activities were done in small cooperative learning groups, an approach she had been committed to since the early 1970s.

Jean placed a high value on communication and strove to promote collaborative interactions among students. She described herself as a language teacher who used literature as a vehicle to teach listening, speaking, reading, and writing--but most basic of all, thinking. As a teacher of literature, she tried to teach the particular skills that are important to literary analysis. However, she chose passages for analysis that dealt with developmental issues that impact on students' lives. She challenged their assumptions and tried to promote raised consciousness and self-development. She explained that most students were not going to become scholars or literary critics, not even English majors. What was most important for Jean was that her students

> go forth with something that may raise them above some level of "work robot." Something that will make life meaningful. Something that might maybe allow them to appreciate a sunset. (interview, 11/5, year 1)

Literature was her means to accomplishing this end.

Jackie Grant

Jackie Grant never aspired to be a teacher. She loved to write and was drawn to the theatrical arts, but her mother insisted she prepare herself for a more practical profession. She majored in Speech Education and minored in English--and to her surprise, she loved her student teaching experience. After graduation, she took a position as an English teacher with the city of Delamont and began a master's program in English literature to qualify for permanent certification as a teacher of English.

When the study began, Jackie had taught for 25 years and was pursuing a Ph.D. in English, with a concentration in Creative Writing. She was in the midst of a shift in her teaching from a traditional content orientation toward the process-oriented approaches that have characterized recent reforms in the profession at large. Talking of her earlier approaches, she commented, "I was so unhappy with what I was doing, that I just couldn't do it anymore" (interview, 10/2, year 2). She was eager for change.

Freed from the constraints imposed by her earlier view of the teacher as transmitter of a canonical body of knowledge, Jackie was seeking to develop curricula that would expand students' participation and ownership in their learning activities. For example, her ninth-grade honors class wrote, produced, and presented their own original plays to an audience of student friends. Similarly, her lower-track ninth graders wrote a "Teachers' Rap" and then enlisted several teachers and administrators to recite various stanzas while the students videotaped the performances.

When asked what she emphasized in her classes, Jackie responded, "Clarity and completeness in understanding and communication. I want students to know **how** to be clear about meaning--their own and that of other writers" (interview, 9/4, year 2). Thus, she approached the curriculum with a writer's eye toward structures and strategies. She taught form as a set of tools or devices from which one chooses. In literature, she was similarly concerned with the choices that writers make and how those choices influence readers.

Jackie's love of reading, writing, and language was apparent to her students, and they respected and liked her for her knowledge and enthusiasm. In general, she approached traditional content from a progressive stance. Her manner and purposes were student centered, focusing on students' questions and contributions rather than her own. She taught grammar as something for students to utilize in their own writing to accomplish their own purposes. She taught writing as a way to develop students' critical literacy. She taught literature as subject matter for thinking and talking and relating to one's own life experiences. Jackie's overriding conviction was that being able to use the English language with skill and fluency was key to her students realizing their most promising futures. She geared her curriculum toward giving them the means and confidence to succeed.

With the basic-level students, one very important source of support for Jackie's goals was the reading specialist who, together with an aide, provided in-class congruent reading instruction.

Margo Morrison

Margo Morrison was the reading teacher assigned to Jackie's English 9-3 classes. Nearly all Level 3 English students had been identified as below state reading standards and, therefore, had to be provided with remediation. Instead of a separate reading lab period, students were given remediation within their regular English class by a certified reading teacher accompanied by an aide. Rather than a pull-out or visitation program, these additional specialists were permanently assigned to each class and taught alongside the regular English teacher on a daily basis.

Jackie, who had not taught a lower-track class in the past ten years, welcomed Margo's expertise with lower-ability students when she began teaching English 9-3 in the second year of our study. Margo and Jackie quickly established a team-teaching approach.

Margo had an M.S. in Reading from a local university, and 16 years experience when she joined the study. Her undergraduate work was in languages, with a major in French and a minor in Russian. Her undergraduate training provided her with a strong background in literature and literary analysis, as well as a perspective on how difficult it can be to deal with content and analysis when struggling to make sense of the words on a page.

Because of the low literacy level of the students she worked with, Margo was very concerned with developing their skills in vocabulary, spelling, and grammatical form. She took a whole-language approach to teaching reading, and also supported Jackie's efforts to teach literary knowledge. As Margo put it, remedial students

need to know these things. It's part of the reading comprehension process. They need to understand ideas and what the author is trying to do to understand the novel. I want them to read for meaning. The state reading test is a cloze test. It tests for meaning. I don't worry about pronunciation much. I'm concerned with the ideas. (interview, 9/6, year 2)

Margo hoped that all students would learn to be literate and would come to value books in their lives. She wanted them to see how literature reflects everyday life and how it can help a person deal with daily problems by offering alternative scenarios and alternative solutions. Of her teaching with Jackie, Margo explained, "Although we team teach, my role is more that of a resource" (interview, 12/2, year 2). As a reading specialist, it was Margo's responsibility to develop the students' literacy skills and to prepare them to pass the state reading competency test. With congruency, however, it was also her goal "to get them through the English curriculum" (interview, 9/6, year 2).

Results of the Study

Each of the classes we observed developed its own set of curricular conversations, defined in terms of what was considered appropriate content and the kinds of activities that were legitimated as appropriate in dealing with that content. The conversational domains differed greatly, however, in the ways they were structured and in the nature of the conversations that evolved within the domains.

In the classes observed, two sets of mechanisms were used to provide focus and continuity to the curricular conversations. One set of mechanisms reflected *conventions for discussing the conversational domain*, the conventions governing the ways of knowing and doing that were encouraged or required in day-to-day interaction (taking discussion to include all of the writing, reading, and media study that were part of the broader conversation, as well as the oral interaction that took place). Discussion conventions governed aspects of both the form and content of discussion and interaction. They determined, on the one hand, how discussion was to be organized in exploring the domain (ranging from teacher-led whole-class activities to cooperative learning groups to individual seatwork), and on the other, what were considered appropriate topics and issues as part of the English language arts in general and literature in particular (ranging from textual analysis to personal response to issues in contemporary life).

An important aspect of the conventions governing discussions of the curricular domain in each classroom had to do with the expectations about where the discussion would lead. In an open discussion, the outcomes were subject to negotiation depending upon the arguments and

experiences offered as evidence. In a closed discussion, on the other hand, various kinds of knowledge and experience might be drawn upon as evidence or might need to be reconciled, but the conclusions that were to be reached were predetermined (e.g., canonical interpretations, or specific content knowledge). Closed discussions were in effect monologues, with a well-defined set of ideas and understandings that were meant to be conveyed; student participation, to the extent that it was invited, was used to demonstrate that the students indeed had acquired the requisite understandings. More open discussions, on the other hand, centered around "authentic" questions (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991, 1992), in which a variety of possible understandings and interpretations were invited and assumed. In this case, meanings were expected to be negotiated in the course of discussion, the discourse became more dialogic, and the outcomes were expected to emerge only as the discussion progressed.

The second set of mechanisms that provided continuity to the curriculum had to do with the overall *structure of the conversational domain* as it was operationalized in a particular course--what constituted a unit of study, and how these units were sequenced and related one to another. The amount of structure was governed by the nature and extent of the relatedness among works chosen for study, and varied widely from class to class. In some classes, the domain was essentially unstructured, with activities and works chosen almost at random on a day-by-day basis. Although the teacher or students might make connections between one work and another, these connections were serendipitous and unsystematic. In other classes, works were selected because of their ability to contribute to a larger, cumulative conversation that might stretch throughout a semester or year. Such a curriculum invited the making of connections between works, as well as a continuing process of construal and reconstrual of the underlying ideas or issues. Teachers differed from class to class--and sometimes from topic to topic within the same class--in the discussion conventions they established and the domain structure they imposed. They also differed from one another in the domain structures and discussion conventions they were most likely to adopt at all.

Discussion Conventions as an Aspect of Curriculum

The discussion conventions governed and determined those things that stayed the same even as a class progressed: how discussion took place, what was talked about, and where the discussion was expected to lead. They describe the seamless web of expectations that provide a sense of coherence in spite of the fits and starts of day-to-day interaction through which curriculum is enacted. For the occasional visitor to a classroom, the conventions governing discussion within a curricular domain create some of the most obvious features of accomplished teaching: They provide the consistencies in activities and expectations that have been variously dealt with as the "style" or "school" or classroom "persona" adopted by the teacher. The most

examined discussion conventions concern the sequence and pattern of teacher-student interaction, particularly as it is manifested in traditional teacher-centered classrooms (Cazden, 1988; Marshall, 1989; Marshall, Klages, & Fehlman, 1990; Mehan, 1979; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991, 1992). Discussion conventions define what is orderly and what is out of order, who speaks when, how judgments of effectiveness are rendered; and students' roles in the construction of knowledge. In addition to these aspects of the form of teaching and learning, discussion conventions as we are using them also include expectations about the content of English instruction: the kinds of questions to be asked about literary texts; the concepts to be explored; the vocabulary through which these concepts are expressed; the relevance of personal knowledge and experience; and the nature of acceptable argument and evidence. Discussion conventions structure the contexts within which specific discussions are played out, and as such provide a considerable measure of stability and comfort for teachers and students alike: They come to class with certain expectations about the experiences they will have there, and most of the time those expectations are fulfilled.

We are treating these discussion conventions as a part of curriculum, because these expectations are a significant part of what students are learning: They are a tacit statement of what it means to "do English." Langer (1992a), studying the nature of effective literature instruction, found that the instructional scaffolding that teachers provided emphasized two important aspects of discussion conventions as we have been describing them: Her teachers provided scaffolding that helped students learn how to discuss, as well as scaffolding that helped them learn what was appropriate to discuss (which Langer discussed as ways to think about literature). In many cases students learn the conventions governing discussion of the domain quickly, and act accordingly, particularly as they move from one school classroom to another. Studying college and graduate school courses, however, Berkenkotter et al. (1988), Herrington (1985), and McCarthy (1987) have shown the difficulties that students can experience when they encounter domains with conventions that differ too much from what they have come to expect in previous classes. Delpit (1986, 1988) and Villanueva (1993), arguing from the perspective of minority students at risk of school failure, have made similar points about the importance of learning "the rules of the game"--which are quite different from the overtly presented curriculum. Learning the conventions of the curricular domains in each subject as they are enacted in particular classrooms, including what counts as appropriate argument and evidence in different situational contexts within the classroom, can be a long and stressful process. Not all students succeed.

The classes we studied were chosen to reflect different approaches to accomplished teaching, and therefore differed considerably in the conventions they established for discussion of the curricular domain. Four examples will illustrate the varieties of ways literature was discussed in these classes, and the variations that these produced in what it meant to study literature.

Tony Harrison's PASS Class: Following the Story Line

PASS (Progress & Achievement for Special Students) was a local program at Riverhill aimed at high ability, low achieving ninth-grade students. High ability was defined as high scores on standardized math tests; low achieving was indicated by low middle-school grades. The intent of the program was to keep class size small (under 20 students), keep parent involvement high (weekly reports by teachers), and keep students involved in the ninth-grade honors curriculum. There were about 75 students in the program, each of whom took special English, math, history, and science classes. Teachers met weekly to discuss the students in the program.

For the students in Tony Harrison's Grade 9 PASS class, the domain of English consisted of reading literature, writing, watching films, and studying grammar and vocabulary. Explorations of the domain usually took the form of teacher-led discussion, and the bulk of that discussion revolved around the literature. Writing assignments were tied explicitly or implicitly to the reading. Films were always versions of the literature read. In Tony's class, grammar and vocabulary were separate from literature. Vocabulary consisted of weekly lists of words; grammar of various separate units.

Most of the discussion of literature in this classroom focused on plot and character. For example, during one of Tony's lessons on The Odyssey, he wrote the following questions on the board:

1. Who brings Odysseus back to his house? How is O dressed?
2. Who recognizes O? Explain.
3. Why did the two beggars fight?
4. How does Antinous react when O asks for food?
5. Identify: Argos, Antinous.
6. Explain the trick Penelope plays on the suitors.
7. What is the contest that has been set up for the suitors? (observation, 10/26, year 2)

All of the questions related to plot or character motivation, and in the ensuing discussion Tony marched the class through the questions one by one. Although Tony had intended to introduce some other discussion topics regarding The Odyssey, "following the story line" became the dominant conversation:

> B: What did you want them to get out of The Odyssey?
> T: First of all, the story of a myth, a classic myth; I also wanted to get some concept of the storytelling nature of people in general. I didn't want to go much beyond that, but I wanted to set them up to see parts of The Odyssey in other cultures, things like that. I wanted them to know the concept of a hero in Greek culture because that is different in other cultures. But basically I wanted them to follow a story line (interview, 11/2, year 2)

Similarly, in teaching Great Expectations Tony focused on the plot, even though other topics were current:

> B: Did you try to carry through this Dickens-as-social-critic theme through the discussion?
> T: No, at various times it would come up. Mostly we were trying to follow the plot and then trying to get some of the message [Dickens] is trying to get across.
> B: And by message you mean the social commentary?
> T: The social commentary, but it doesn't come up every day. Most days we concentrated on the story. (interview, 2/24, year 2)

Tony's focus on plot sometimes led into character and character motivation. This occurred, for example, in the study of Romeo and Juliet later in the year:

> They are getting more now. They are getting more of the plot and they are jumping ahead. That's why I am trying to develop the character of Tybalt, the character of Juliet, so they can begin to predict what will happen. Seems to me they are already starting to do that. (interview, 5/17, year 2)

As this interview illustrates, plot and character were bound together for Tony. (Indeed, character analyses often account for characters' actions.) But discussion of character was dependent upon knowledge of plot in Tony's classes.

In addition to talk about plot and character, literature study in this class involved discussion of how the literature related to students' lives. This concern surfaced at different points throughout the course. In an early observation (9/29, year 2), Tony urged students to think about how the creation stories they were reading were similar to one another, and then how they compared to students' "own beliefs." In discussing Great Expectations, Tony related that the class spent an entire day talking about New Jersey's Department of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) as a lead-in to the study of Dickens:

> ... we talked for an entire day about what DYFS does and what services it has. And we talked about how Dickens was going to address the fact that there was no DYFS and that is part of what he writes about. I wanted to make Dickens a little bit more lively that just another English author. And the kids really related to it. (interview, 2/24, year 2)

In a lesson on African proverbs, Tony singled out relevance as the most important part of the lesson: "The most important thing was that the [proverbs] made so much sense in their own lives.... To me this was an assignment that touched their lives" (interview, 2/24, year 2). Finally, in discussing The Learning Tree, students reported that many of Tony's questions and assignments focused on how they felt about the characters and whether they could relate to the story. As a writing assignment for that book, which deals with racial prejudice, Tony asked students to write about an incident in their own lives when they felt that they had been victims of discrimination. Students then compiled their stories into a volume entitled "Riverhill's Learning Tree."

The emphasis on story line derived in large part from Tony's sense of this class as "under-achievers" who needed to develop academic skills and strategies. As he explained in discussing Great Expectations, Tony said his goal was to get them "to follow a story line and find out a way to take that information and use it to study" (interview, 2/24, year 2). The pace was slow, which Tony felt was "worth it to get the kids to understand how to work" (interview, 5/10, year 2).

Since so much of the discussion revolved around plot, discussions were expected to lead to clear understanding of, and consensus about, "what happened." On tests and essays, students were similarly expected to provide the one right answer. The exception to this expectation was the discussions of the relevance of literature to life, as in the Riverhill Learning Tree assignment and in the discussion of African proverbs.

Tony explained his emphases in an interview late in the year:

B: What is the essential thing that you are looking for?
T: I'm looking to have them relate to it as much as possible, so that they can get into it, because I think they get more out of it if they are interested in it. Even if they don't I want them to see how the author describes things, how he constructs the story, the author's craft. Then beyond that does the story have anything to say to us, what is the author trying to get across to us. (interview, 5/17, year 2)

These twin elements--a focus on the author's craft, and deriving from it what the story has to say to us--provided a firm set of expectations about what literary study was about. With the low achieving students in the PASS class, "craft" got reduced to plot and character, and what the story has to say sometimes got postponed. Nonetheless the students had a clear sense of Mr. Harrison's expectations for literary study, saw him as patient and understanding, and in general responded well to his teaching.

Cheryl James's AP Class: Through Literature, Know Thyself

In Cheryl's Senior Advanced Placement course, the curricular domain was explored through student-initiated discussion that dealt with how various works of literature might relate to the conduct of one's life. One of the students interviewed summed this up as "know thyself." Another described the approach as getting "to learn who you are."

Though the course emphasized themes of self-knowledge and knowing who you are, these themes were realized through the text and discussion demanded close readings of text. As one student noted, Cheryl would typically start a discussion by reading a passage and asking, "What is he really saying here?" Students were expected to "delve down" into the literature to find its meaning, as another student explained.

A discussion of Linden Hills was typical of the text talk in discussions. On one day when we observed the class, a group of students was giving a group presentation in response to a teacher question about religion:

Some interesting comments on religion and the place it has in the lives, experiences, and values of believers vs. non-believers are made in Linden Hills. In addition, the place of religious leaders as well as their special problems in belief, integrity, morality, etc. should be regarded, not only as they appear in Linden Hills but also in the two previous novels read.

In leading the discussion, the students focused on close reading, asking pointed textual questions (for example, "Why does [Luther's wife] find notes between Kings I and II?"). The questions seemed genuine and the students debated their answers with considerable involvement and enthusiasm. In commenting on such discussions, the students interviewed mentioned that the teacher did not dominate and that when she asked questions they were "interpretive" or concerned "parallels to life."

Students noted that discussions were most often initiated by students: One estimated that discussion began with student rather than teacher questions as much as 60% of the time. In fact, some discussions were totally run by students. This led to students' awareness that "you have to talk to fellow students." To facilitate that, Cheryl arranged the chairs in the classroom in two concentric U's. (This was an unusual configuration at Riverhill.)

Tests in this class were almost exclusively essays that continued the emphasis on close textual analysis. The midterm exam was an essay question taken from an old AP exam: "Read the following essay carefully, and then write an essay in which you discuss the complex way in which 'voice' is developed, how the 'voice' changes, and how the diction, syntax, and attitude of the speaker affect the audience." A test on Richard III gave students a series of passages from the play and asked them to "Comment as to artistic, dramatic, and/or thematic significance.... Point out such things as character development, traits or character revealed in the dialogue..." (emphasis in original).

Essay topics tended to be as text-centered as the test questions, though they were more likely to maintain the relationships between literature and general themes or "life." For example, an essay topic on Linden Hills:

> "How does the following relate to Linden Hills: 'For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' (Matthew XVI, 26)."

And an essay on Conrad's novels:

> Conrad's basic theme considers the duality of each man...the "goodness" that he strives for and is proud of...the "darkness" that is his other self. ... There is fear in contemplation of the excesses from which we all might suffer; yet, we love, need, are comforted, while yet

repulsed, by our own duality. ... Discuss the hero of your novel by Conrad in terms of the above points.

Under the discussion conventions established in Cheryl's class, students were expected to develop their own interpretations in response to such questions, rather than to try to parrot what the teacher had in mind. One student put this unambiguously: "You can do whatever you want." Another was less sure, explaining that Cheryl "had a right answer in mind but she won't penalize you if you disagree." All of the students interviewed believed that "making a good argument" and "being creative" were very important to the teacher in grading essays on literature. One student saw the teacher as rewarding "thinking" and engagement: "She can see that in an essay you are trying to get a point across."

In addition to the traditional essays, Cheryl required students to write two "book reactions" per month. These were essentially personal essays, using a book as the springboard. The form of the book reactions required students to provide a brief (2 page) precis of the book read and then discuss what the book meant to them.

For example, one student read Robert Sam Anson's Best Intentions, a book about the death of an African-American student at the hands of New York City police. She responded with a poem by Margaret Walker entitled "Lineage." She quoted the poem and commented on it:

> I presented the poem "Lineage" because it seems to me that if the Black community demonstrated more of the strength and perseverance that our ancestors did, we would be in better shape...I know that some of the qualities of our ancestors would definitely help me throughout my life and I am sure that I am not alone.

Another student wrote about her bout with epilepsy in a book reaction to A Raisin in the Sun:

> Somewhere along the line, I had dreams. I know that they have been "deferred". My hopes of what I would become are dashed, and now I am...well just me. Thus, I can tell you that a dream deferred is a very sad thing. [Ellipsis in original]

Cheryl responded very personally to these essays. To the reaction to Best Intentions, Cheryl wrote a poem to the student. To the reaction to Raisin, she wrote the following:

> Your story of your deferred dream is indeed a poignant one. I can only commend you for putting another lovely activity in its place and also for persevering. Your courage may seem just a way of coping to you, but it is magnificent! Incidentally, your writing, too, is effective, controlled, superb! A--

Cheryl said in interviews that she saw the book reactions as central to the class. She found the reactions got students to "open up." They could read and write about anything, and the teacher responded in an equally personal and open way.

The conventions governing discussions of the conversational domain in the AP course arose out of a combination of Cheryl's vision of literary study as involving an exploration of self through literature, and her reliance on student-initiated discussion to carry this exploration forward. The curriculum that resulted treated the students as reflective, critical readers and writers. Whatever they were reading, they were expected to analyze it critically, and through their analyses explore the relationships between literature and life. The teacher might prompt or challenge them, but the students themselves accepted a significant part of the responsibility for moving the discussion forward.

This emphasis contributed to the generally positive response that students had. As one student explained, such an atmosphere "makes you feel like you want to do the work."

Jean Hutchinson: Using Literature to Explore Human Behavior

As Jean Hutchinson designed her curriculum at Lexington, she was guided by what she perceived as important for her students to learn in order to be prepared for what lay ahead of them. With her twelfth-grade class, Jean liked to use literature to generate and sustain a conversation about recognizing alternatives and making thought-out, conscious choices. Her priorities were grounded in a no-nonsense practicality nurtured by her 25 years of teaching in city schools. As Jean related,

> I had one class of seniors last year with three kids suicidal. Now talking about the fine points of literary style when I'm looking at three kids that I know at any moment may decide to off themselves. ... In my value system there is absolutely no choice. I will deal with the personal level. I will put my energy and my time, and I will do what I can, in terms of design of activities, in working off of my curriculum to provide them with some alternatives. (interview, 11/7, year 1)

In all her classes, but especially in Grade 12, Jean defined the subject matter of English in terms of getting students to reflect on their lives and the society around them. In the senior class we observed, she allocated the most time to analyzing the patterns of human behavior and grappling with the social issues depicted in the stories read.

One of Jean's best efforts was her resolve in getting students to work effectively in cooperative learning groups. She explained that the deeper, higher-level thinking she was looking for is more suitable for cooperative learning groups. Moreover, group work forces everyone to be involved and active. Aside from a few fact-based study sheets assigned for homework to check students' understanding of what is happening in the story, Jean's literature guide questions were discussed and completed in small groups. In this forum, she usually freed students from having to find "right" answers; achieving consensus was more often the criterion for success. The desire to remain in good standing with their peers prompted most students to contribute. Moreover, because of the interactive nature of cooperative group activities, students seldom got bored.

Jean provided her cooperative groups with a variety of structures and supports for their activities. She taught basic literary terminology to provide a common language to use when talking about stories and how authors' communicate with readers about ideas and feelings. She also provided her students with a variety of frameworks, drawn from psychology, to evaluate characters. These included lists of character traits associated with high and with low self-esteem; Bloom's taxonomy; Maslow's hierarchy of needs; and Kohlberg's stages of moral development. Here Jean assumed the role of expert: When we observed her lecturing, it was most often when such content knowledge was the focus of the lesson.

Jean used two basic types of questions to bring social issues into the discussion. One type would ask the students to compare or contrast attitudes held by a character or the society depicted in the literature with those held by today's society. For example, one cooperative group activity used in conjunction with 1984 had students answer these questions:

1. Describe the attitude and behavior that society in 1984 has about sex.
2. Describe American society's attitude towards sex now. How has this attitude changed over the last 20-25 years? What differences are there between your attitudes towards sex, your parents' attitudes, and your grandparents'?

The other type of activity commonly used to generate a discussion of social issues asked students to list facts from the story being read and then generalize the concept into a statement about people or society today. Unlike the lectures about literary terminology, discussions of social issues were very open. At these times, Jean expected authentic dialogue and a sharing of views.

Another consistent aspect of Jean's literature lessons was a set of activities that asked students to relate what they read to their own personal experiences. She told us that this is where her greatest strength as an English teacher lay. She attempted to capture student interest by focusing on a social or developmental issue from the text that impacts on students' lives, which might help them identify with a character or situation. The study guide assignment for chapter 1 of A Separate Peace is a good example:

> 1. Carefully study the following quotation which is found on p. 11, and then translate it into your own words.
> "...considered authority the necessary evil against which happiness was achieved by reaction, the backboard which returned all insults he threw at it."
> 2. List five authorities who impact on your life in some way.
> 3. Reflect on situations in which you personally have reacted to authority. Write a paragraph in which you describe the authority, the situation and your reaction.
> 4. Reread the quotation above and explain why Phineas felt this way.

Jean's concern with getting students to consider alternatives carried over into her tests. The essay question she constructed for a unit on Hamlet is an example:

> Hamlet believes he must revenge his father's murder. As the bodies pile up, an intelligent 20th Century reader might wonder if there were not some alternatives to Hamlet's course of action. Think of 2-3 alternative ways Hamlet might have dealt with the situation. Choose the best one and explain in detail what Hamlet could have done and how it could have changed the outcomes of the play.

Because of her emphasis on cooperative learning, Jean's classes looked very different from many of the other classes in her school. Nonetheless, students entering her room had just as firm a sense of the conventions that governed the domains of English in her classroom as did students in more teacher-centered classes. The use of cooperative learning groups, the stress on character and character traits, and the consideration of alternative choices and resolutions to personal and

social issues provided a consistent background against which her curriculum evolved on a day to day basis.

Jackie Grant and Margo Morrison: Reading Comprehension for Lower-Track Ninth Graders

The discussion conventions in Jackie Grant's 9-3 English class were shaped largely by the attention to reading comprehension that grew out of the congruent reading instruction that Margo Morrison and her aide provided within the class. As the class evolved, the backbone of the literature curriculum, and the most common activity, was the reading comprehension study guide.

Three study guides were used during the year, each very different. The guide for the first novel that was read by the class, The Outsiders, consisted of cloze exercises. Ten to 15 important sentences were copied from each chapter with one or two key words omitted. Students had to fill in the correct missing word. According to Margo, the idea behind the search and find exercise was that it required the students to read the chapter attentively. The goal was primarily text comprehension--plot and character. The cloze format also gavae Margo a chance to teach students shortcut reading strategies such as skimming and scanning. She explained:

> ...the students are supposed to find the missing words as they are reading along, but they don't necessarily do that so they have to go bacak afterwards and try to find the answers which many find difficult. So I say to them, "I can find any answere in any book because I have this technique. I just have to find a key word [in the question] and go down the page in the book and locate that word." ... They are limited readers. ... These are survival methods and that's what these kids need. (interview, 10/21, year 2)

With Durango Street, the text required for the second quarter, Jackie and Margo created a study guide that pushed students a step further. The questions covered the story happenings, but there were also journal questions for each chapter, asking students to form some conclusions about what they read. The journal questions included:

> Pretend you have to explain the term "youth gang" or "street gang" to a visitor from another country. Write what you would tell the visitor about who gang members are and what they do.
>
> In your opinion, does Mrs. Henry's decision to stay away from Alex Robbins' parents' group mean that she does not care about Rufus?

Do you think Rufus will ever return to school?

The journal questions sought to get the students to reflect on the story and draw conclusions based on their understandings of the characters. Both Jackie and Margo expected some differences in the responses because the students' personal experiences differed.

For the third quarter, Jackie designed a generic study guide so that students could read either The Boy Who Drank Too Much or My Darling, My Hamburger. The study guide questions were straightforward. For example:

1. The protagonist of your book is:
2. The event that causes the protagonist to change is:
3. How does the protagonist change?
4. What do you think the protagonist would have learned through this experience?

The guide also included "vocabulary for literature": exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, denouement, protagonist/ antagonist, the five types of conflict, and foreshadowing, irony, and satire. Jackie and Margo felt the terms "were one of the things they should be aware of. Because... we don't see all of them being just 3s forever" (Margo, interview, 2/12, year 2).

The unit also required a research paper on the topic addressed in the selected novel, either alcoholism or teenage pregnancy. Business-letter form was reviewed so students could request materials from an appropriate social service agency.

Each of the literature units included a final project. For the third quarter, students were given three choices (accompanying directions have been omitted):

1. Make a mobile illustrating your book. Illustrate the following with drawings and/or magazine pictures: the title, setting, protagonist, antagonist, and the climactic event.
2. With a partner, dramatize one scene from the book by writing it as a short play or movie scene.
3. Draw or cut and paste a movie poster for your book.

The last quarter of the year was filled with similar activities, except that students read nine pieces of short fiction of their own choosing from a collection of abridged excerpts entitled

Tales of Mystery and the Unknown. Questions on these stories coaxed students toward more critical reading:

> Because the stories are mysteries, there is a lot of reading between the lines, inference type of questions, which these kids have a lot of trouble with because they are on this concrete cognitive level and inference is a very difficult thing for them. (Margo, interview, 10/21, year 2)

Typically, for a few weeks after handing out a book, the first 10 to 15 minutes of class were set aside for quiet reading. Students were not allowed to take the books home to read because past experience cautioned against it; students too often lost books or forgot to bring them to class. Moreover, reading in class furnished an opportunity to poll the students' response to the text, and their comprehension of it, when it was fresh in their minds. As one student told us, "Every time we started something, she [Jackie Grant] asked us how we felt about it and we'd go over what happened and the characters and stuff" (interview, 6/10, year 2).

Discussions sometimes arose spontaneously when Jackie provided background information on the context of the literature selection being read or when Margo was explaining the definitions of vocabulary words (taken from the literature) that were assigned for study every few weeks. When Jackie and Margo invited students to ask questions, contribute examples and personal anecdotes, and share opinions, as they frequently did, it resulted in a more interesting class. Several of the students we interviewed mentioned class discussions as one of the things they liked best about the class. Jackie and Margo allowed for a variety of responses in class discussion, as well as in writing, whenever personal experience, opinion, or relevance to life was involved.

Whole class discussions, however, were not a regular feature in the day-to-day routine of the class. Students did not know how to follow, or they resisted, the conventions of teacher-led discussion. There were no question-answer sequences or orderly turn-takings. Sometimes just a few people were engaged in the discussion, sometimes there were side discussions going on, and only sometimes was everyone interested in what was being said. Often a student would make a pertinent comment directly to Jackie or Margo who in turn would repeat what was said to the whole class in the hope of sparking more dialogue. Jackie believed that learning to communicate well orally was especially important for these students:

> It seems to me, for particularly the city kids, one of the things they have to do if they are going to succeed is that they have to learn how to talk to other learned people. Now 9-3s

are probably not going to go to graduate school, so it's a question of degree. I need to take who they are and where they are and build on that to make them effective communicators within whatever community they are going to have to communicate in. (interview, 10/2, year 2)

Although Jackie and Margo had many strategies to enlist students' attention and involvement, not all students would buy into the class. Many exhibited generalized apathy; most were easily distracted. Some students expressed negative or even antagonistic attitudes toward school. The following pieces, taken from a booklet of published 9-3 student writing, were written by students in Jackie's and Margo's class (third quarter, year 2):

A SIMPLE REASON
This school is fun and games;
I hear some kids brag
But all it is to me
Is a really big DRAG!

The most thing I hate about school is a boring class. Some teachers talk slowly and sometimes you can't understand them. Most of the teachers in Lexington High teach wierd [sic] and always just bug you every five minutes. They bug me about not doing my work in class and to keep my head up.

To deal with this negativism, Jackie and Margo consciously endeavored to keep the atmosphere of the class friendly, upbeat, and supportive. Jackie explained that their objective was "moving them along by degrees without being too intimidating about it" (interview, 11/6, year 2). Students were constantly encouraged and assured that attending and "doing the work," with help when needed, would result in a passing grade. Margo described the class as "group oriented, but self paced" (interview, 2/12, year 2). At the start of the last two quarters, students were given a checklist of minimum requirements which had to be completed to pass the quarter. Jackie explained that this checklist permitted flexibility by eliminating deadlines and promoted responsibility by giving students the power to choose when and in what order to do the tasks for the quarter. She cited another happy effect of the minimum requirements policy: "We will not fight with them. It won't be a crunch situation where every day we are jumping on them saying 'This is due on Friday!'"(interview, 6/13, year 2). Jackie believed that these lower-achieving students did better in a learning environment that was nonconfrontational and low pressured.

The use of structured work sheets and writing assignments, the low-keyed instructional environment, and the emphasis on comprehension and vocabulary skills created a consistent set of expectations about what it meant to "do English."

Notwithstanding these efforts, absences were frequent. By May, 8 of the original 24 students had withdrawn from school and another 3 had not been in class for several months. The steady decline in class members compromised Jackie's and Margo's attempt to maintain a sense of community, stability, and continuity over the course of the year. As the year progressed, whole-class discussion and group projects took place less often and individual seat work and independent projects filled most of the class time. For those students who remained, however, the smaller class size meant they received more individual attention and tutorial assistance. By the end of the year, the students who remained were all pleased with their ninth-grade English class.

Summary: Discussion Conventions

Within the sample of classes we studied, some ways of discussing the domain of literature were more widespread than others. Most of the teachers used a teacher-led discussion format, for example, rather than lecture or small-group discussion. Most placed primary emphasis on traditional aspects of literary form and content, rather than on social issues or readers' personal responses. Most had more than one emphasis, often fostering more open discussion in some parts of the domain while keeping the dialogue about other aspects of literature more teacher-centered and closed. Table 2 summarizes some of the features that defined how the conversational domain was typically discussed across the 19 classrooms, and illustrates the diversity that occurred both within and between teachers in the ways of discussing they expected students to engage in, in the topics that were most likely to be addressed, and in where the discussions were expected to lead. The entries in the major columns in Table 2 are really surrogates for sets of complexly structured discourse situations. Within a particular classroom, there are conventions governing which type of discourse situation will be adopted for which parts of the curricular domain (e.g., lectures may be used for introducing literary terminology, small group discussions for exploring personal response), as well as about appropriate behavior within each of the particular discourse types (for example, who initiates what kinds of interaction, the appropriate forms of evidence and argument, and the role of personal experience).

The point for the moment, however, is that all of these accomplished teachers established a firm set of expectations about the kinds of discussion that would take plac within the

curricular domain, providing a predictable environment to respond to and interact within. They and the students had a well-developed set of expectations about both the format and focus of literature lessons, and most of the time those expectations were fulfilled. These expectations became a strong determinant of what students would learn to know and do in these classes--whether that meant becoming proficient in textual analysis, developing positions on social issues, taking the initiative in whole class discussion, or demonstrating reading comprehension. If the same works of literature had been embedded in each of these classrooms, very different curricular experiences would have ensued.

Domain Structure

If the classes we studied differed in the conventions established for discussing the literary domain, they differed even more in the larger structures that were used to organize the domain and relate works one to another. At one extreme, structure that extended beyond the lesson was virtually nonexistent: Each day was planned to be a "fresh start," particularly for lower-track classes where teachers were never sure who in fact would be in class from one day to the next. At the other extreme, the year was planned as an integrated whole, each unit not only extending the conversational domain but also inviting reconstrual of materials that had been explored earlier in the course. In between, teachers relied on a variety of devices that imposed more or less structure on individual units, and on the links between them. Examples follow.

Zach Williams: English One Day at a Time

Zach imposed little structure on the curriculum for his ninth-grade lower-track ("level 3") students at Lexington. At best, his curriculum represented a catalog of reading selections dealing with social issues that might be of interest to young adults. The books Zach selected were chosen from a departmental list of twelve adolescent novels earmaarked for level 3 classes. He had evaluated the list as "horrible" and desperately in need of new titles, but there was little time to review possible replacement titles, and money to buy them was scarce. He ended up choosing five texts which he thought offered enough substance to sustain some discussion: Paul Zindel's The Pigman, William Armstrong's Sounder, Gloria Miklowitz's After the Bomb, S.E. Hinton's Rumblefishble, and Irene Hunt's The Lottery Rose. He augmented the novels with some shorter readings, particularly from Scholastic Scope, which were about contemporary issues.

Neither Zach nor his students saw any overt connections among the course readings, beyond a vague sense of a common set of selection criteria. Thus one student explained that "all

Table 2. Conventions for Discussing the Domain of Literature in the Case Study Classes

Class	Teacher	Grade	How to Discuss	What to Discuss	Where Discussion Will Lead
			Riverhill High School		
1	Harrison	10	Teacher-led discussion	Textual analysis	closed
2	Harrison	10	Teacher-led discussion	Textual analysis	closed
3	Harrison	10	Teacher-led discussion Student reports	Clash of cultures Nature of canon	somewhat open somewhat open
4	Harrison	10	Teacher-led discussion	Textual analysis	closed
5	Harrison	9	Teacher-led discussion	Plot & character Relevance to life	closed open
6	Harrison	9	Teacher-led discussion	Plot & character Relevance to life	closed open
7	James	11/12	Teacher-led discussion	Decline of Western civ. Textual analysis	open open
8	James	12	Student-initiated discussion	Know thyself Close reading	open open
9	Callahan	11/12	Teacher-led discussion	Textual analysis Language study	somewhat open somewhat open
10	Callahan	11/12	Teacher-led discussion	Contemporary issues Textual analysis	open somewhat open
11	French	9	Teacher-led discussion	Multiple perspectives	open
			Lexington High School		
12	Williams	9	Teacher-led discussion Reader response journals	Personal response Textual analysis Literary terminology	open somewhat open closed
13	Williams	9	Reader response journals Teacher-led discussion	Plot & character Personal response Relevance to life	closed open open
14	Hutchinson	9	Teacher-led discussion Individual seat work	Literary terminology Plot & character Relevance to self	closed closed open
15	Hutchinson	10	Cooperative learning groups Teacher-led discussion	Literary terminology Textual analysis Critical thinking Social & personal issues	closed somewhat open open open
16	Hutchinson	10	Individual and small group seat work Teacher-led and student-initiated discussion	Plot & character Problem solving Personal & social issues	closed somewhat open open
17	Hutchinson	12	Cooperative learning groups Teacher-led discussion	Character & theme Literary terminology Personal and social issues	closed closed open
18	Grant/ Morrison	9	Individual seat work Mini-lessons with discussion Group and individual projects	Story elements Literary terminology Relevance to self & life	closed closed open
19	Grant	9	Lecture/discussion Response journals Group and individual projects	Historical contexts Literary structure & technique Textual analysis	closed closed open

the books have to do with real issues in the world and they teach you a lesson," while another suggested that "all the books he picked are very interesting. He probably picked them because he thinks they are good." When Zach was asked if there was a structure or principle governing the curriculum, he focused on some of the discussion conventions that governed his lessons, rather than on any broader structure within the domain. He explained that his connections lay in the skills he sought to foster: reading comprehension, coherence in writing, a willingness to get involved in life. Beyond that, he admitted, "there is no continuity in the 9-3" (interview, 2/28, year 1).

In fact, the lack of a larger structure in his curriculum was a deliberate strategy for dealing with the problems of his lower-track classes. He explained:

> Because of society's ills that keep these kids skipping and dropping out, and dropping in, and going to New York [City], and running away, and coming back. ...it is always different every time I have a class. I see a different set of kids every time the class meets. [So] I concentrate on getting something done in each period that doesn't depend on the kid having been there the previous period. (interview, 2/28, year 1)

Zach constantly urged his students to tell him how they felt about what they were reading and why. "And it doesn't matter if they like it or hate it, just so they form some opinion," he said (interview, 3/20, year 1). He wanted students to express their reactions to the literature becauuse

> through that responding is where the students start figuring out who they are, what kind of a person they're going to be. ... How much of me is this kind of person? How do I feel about this kind of person, this incident, this act of kindness? Would I do the same? (interview, 10/31, year 1)

But despite his best efforts, Zach confided, at best only a quarter of the students were responsive.

As the year progressed and he found his 9-3 students were less skilled and less responsive than he had anticipated, Zach decided that

> the next time I get 9-3s, it is going to be a lot more short fiction. They have too short an attention span. A novel isn't something they are ready for. They at least had some kind of reaction to this three page story [from Scope]. They can be involved for three pages. (interview, 2/29, year 1)

Since Zach believed that most of the students did not have the reading skills necessary to read independently with understanding and interest, so he spent a good deal of time reading the required texts aloud to them, modelling intonation and phrasing. He believed this reading aloud also helped the students' comprehension, which, in turn, developed their interest in the story "because on their own they aren't capable of phrasing it in a meaningful way to themselves" (interview, 11/8, year 1). Discussion activities and writing, primarily reader-response journals, were in turn related to material covered in these read-aloud sessions, breaking down even the book-length works into relatively independent daily segments that could be handled by whomever happened to show up for class. Zach's strategy for providing all students the opportunity to engage in the discussion, even on a drop-in basis, reinforced the day-by-day feel of the class.

Claudia Callahan: British Literature in Sequence

The junior/senior course in British literature at Riverhill was open to all students, though most of the students who elected to take it saw themselves as college bound. Claudia Callahan construed the course as a survey of British literature, and selected works that would "represent" various literary periods. Though her approach was extensive it was not all-inclusive--she omitted authors and periods she did not know well, and concentrated on those she liked. As she explained,

> I thought I sounded rather dictatorial, saying "you will read this" but I think when a teacher does choose something that she likes there is so much enthusiasm for it. ... For a one-semester course in British Lit a lot of choices do have to be made and so that becomes the basis by which I make choices. If it is something I like then I think they will get more out of it. (interview, 11/16, year 2)

The syllabus that resulted included excerpts from Beowulf and Chaucer; Othello (Shakespeare); Gulliver's Travels (Swift); the Romantic poets; Hard Times (Dickens); The Importance of Being Ernest (Wilde); Pygmalion (Shaw); a collection of Christmas stories; Dubliners (Joyce); The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner (Silitoe); a selection of contemporary poets; and Family (Emecheta). Because they ran out of time, the class never discussed the Silitoe or the contemporary poetry.

The structure of the course was sequential in the sense that the texts were for the most part arranged in chronological order, and Claudia certainly considered the course to offer an historical survey:

> the course is laid out historically and we usually start a new author by talking about the time and what was going on historically that might have influenced the writer. (interview, 12/17, year 2)

Yet questions of history and period were addressed on an ad hoc, book-by-book basis rather than as part of a larger, continuing conversation. Instead, Claudia's emphases in each book tended to reflect her own experiences with them in university course work. Thus she explained her approach to Joyce:

> I don't know if I told you, but I took courses at the New School on Dubliners and Portrait. And I use a lot of my notes from that class with the kids. Talk about Joyce's world and why he wanted to leave it. (interview, 12/17, year 2)

Other topics that received considerable attention included use of language (Beowulf, Canterbury Tales, Othello, and "A Child's Christmas in Wales"); character analysis (Canterbury Tales, Othello, Pygmalion, and Dubliners); and genre analysis (Beowulf, Gulliver's Travels, The Importance of Being Ernest, "Christmas Morning," and Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner [in prospect, even though there was no time for class discussion]).

The impact of these shifting conversations was that the enacted curriculum was essentially a catalog of "greatest hits" of British literature, with few connections among them. In fact, when we interviewed students about their experiences, they were not universally convinced that the course had been organized chronologically. Even when they recognized that the course had taken them period by period, they saw few connections between the books. "We are running through Brit Lit," as Terrie put it. David saw at least some connections, grouping Beowulf and Canterbury Tales as representing the same period--probably because both texts had been part of the same conversation about "language" and "language change" early in the semester.

That some students might not be aware of the chronological structure in a chronologically organized course surprised us when we first encountered it, but it was a consistent finding in the British and American literature survey courses we studied. As in Claudia's case, chronology often ended up serving as a convenient selection device for the teacher, but not a significant part of class discussion or of a larger curricular conversation within which that discussion might be embedded. In most cases, there was little discussion of sequence or historicity or periodization--nor, when only one or two works were read from any particular period, was there enough material

for students to participate in such discussions intelligently even if the teacher initiated them. As a result many students paid little attention to the chronology, or missed it altogether.

Emily French: An Integrated World Cultures Course

World Cultures was a special ninth-grade program at Riverhill. It was a correlated history and English course that students took for two periods back to back. Students were selected to represent the range of abilities at the school, based on middle-school teacher recommendations and middle-school grades. In addition, the class had an even balance of boys and girls, and an ethnic background that mirrored the school population.

The structure of Emily French's class was episodic, moving from one culture to another; but the course also developed more integration among episodes than any other class we studied. As such, it is worth considering in some detail.

The course began with a month-long unit on "Perspectives" that established an initial frame, followed by six more units on broad regions each of which might contain a variety of specific cultural groups: Native American, Middle Eastern, African, Japanese and Chinese, Indian, and European. Emily typically used a novel or long work like an epic poem to anchor the unit. For example, the African unit was anchored by Kaffir Boy and Things Fall Apart; the Middle Eastern unit by the Gilgamesh epic; the Japanese by Sound of Waves (Mishima); the Indian by Nectar in the Sieve; and the European by excerpts from The Odyssey and Romeo and Juliet.

Emily had a firm framework for the course and used it to organize each of the cultures chosen for study:

> We read folktales, dilemma tales, trickster tales, and orphan tales, and I give them patterns. They may not remember all the myths but they will remember the patterns and when they see [myths] later on the patterns will come up. ... Then from all those myths of oral tradition I will then move into short stories, essays. From the myths and stories of one culture I go to the other cultures so they can see how the myths compare across cultures. (interview, 9/21, year 2)

In each culture that the students studied--about one per month--they began by analyzing these mythic patterns. In her first unit, called "perspectives," Emily provided students with a matrix

within which to analyze myths, folktales, and proverbs. Throughout the year, students returned to this chart and method of analysis to compare myths and tales across cultures.

A look at one of the cultural "units"--Africa--will show how these patterns operated. "When I work with any particular culture I have a particular framework" (interview, 11/2, year 2) that she carried from unit to unit:

> It begins with the mythology and proverbs and folktales. So that is the first level at which I work. So I'll do myths, folktales, proverbs, legends from a specific culture within that culture. For example, in Africa I will take Nigerian culture, so I'll study the Nigerian creation myths. We'll take some Nigerian proverbs, we'll take Nigerian folktales, specifically three Trickster tales, the dilemma tales and the orphan tales. Then move into folklore maybe from another country in Africa so that they see that areas differ. (interview, 11/2, year 2)

Running concurrently with the proverbs and folktales were the other genres she emphasized--novels, short stories, poetry.

Most importantly, the "frameworks" for analyzing the tales became a way for students to see patterns across the whole year's course:

> You can set up some frameworks that they can take with them and apply to anything they see and that is what I do all along. So if I've done the analysis they now have that. If I'm looking at an orphan tale I can say to them does this remind us of anything, what pattern is there. (interview, 11/2, year 2)

The frameworks, then, became the real lessons of the class, the centers of the conversational domain. This is what Emily hoped the students would carry away from the class.

Culture was studied through these literary patterns, each unit addressing a different culture, using folktales, myths, and other genres to evidence cultural values and perspectives:

> When I introduce the kids to a culture it all goes back to the first unit on perspectives where we look at myth, folktales, short stories, and genres. (interview, 9/21, year 2)

Although the course was structured around separate cultures, the issue of multiculturalism was itself part of the conversational domain. This expressed itself in several ways. The first way

was in the topic of "perspective." Emily was constantly challenging students to "see" the literature they were reading from beyond their own perspective. Indeed, the first unit of the class was a month-long unit tied together under the theme of Perspectives. But Emily and the students returned to that topic throughout the year.

Emily also encouraged students to see beyond the perspective of their gender as well as their culture. In every unit, there were pieces written about and by women. And that itself became a topic of discussion. For example, the unit on Middle Eastern cultures included a play about the Goddess Annana's descent into the underworld and short stories by women of Saudi Arabia. In teaching the play about Goddess Annana, Emily stressed the theme of women recovering power by returning to the sources of ancient myth. In reading the play, only the girls in the class read parts. Emily said, "The men won't feel bad because we have just been reading Gilgamesh" (observation, 11/16, year 2). In fact, Emily told the class she had brought the play in as a "balance to Gilgamesh."

For Emily the topic of multiculturalism was at bottom a conversation about the integrity of differences--cultural and individual. Just as the topic of multiculturalism was made explicit, so was the topic of interpretation. That is, students talked about different ways of interpreting and responding to the literature they were reading. And they talked about how the literature related to their individual lives. And indeed there were a variety of activities designed to let students respond to the literature in ways that seemed most relevant to them. For example, within the units, students could perform dances, draw, write poetry, or create multimedia projects to demonstrate their understanding of the literature. In addition, Emily used journals extensively with students:

> If I give them questions they just run through the reading and answer the questions because they are used to that. But I ask them to come to class and write a personal response, something in their life that was triggered by the reading and then with Paula Gunn Allen it is going to be facts about women: some facts about women that you didn't know before. (interview, 11/2, year 2)

But the discussions were about more than just relevance. Often they were about the nature or act of individual response. Indeed, 25% of the final exam in the course consisted of a "reflective" essay in which students wrote about their own writing and reading processes.

The curricular domain in this class was well integrated. Writing was related to the reading and the several strands of topics were well integrated with one another. The literary patterns were integrated with the cultural patterns; indeed, the students realized the cultural patterns by articulating the literary patterns. The multicultural texts they read reflected the cultures they studied as well as the culture of their own classroom. Finally, this multicultural classroom stressed the differences inherent in literary interpretation and made that a topic of conversation as well.

Within the various units, Emily typically used a novel or other long work as a focus of discussion, drawing the various strands of oral and written activities together. Her description of her use of Things Fall Apart can serve as a model of her approach:

> I will take something like Achebe's Things Fall Apart and the cultural piece of colonialism will be there. Actually the book is in three parts. The first is how Ebo life is lived, then how colonialism comes in and destroys the central hero, and then third the questioning of a new kind of life and whether that is valid or not valid and that will bring up issues of whether colonialism is good or bad and how we differentiate that. In his book there are proverbs which I will connect, there are fairy tales, there will be a fairy tale, a dilemma tale, and a trickster tale. So they'll identify that. And I'll be able to move toward the central character and take all the literary aspects of that. Then when I'm finished I'll open that up to gender issues because there is wife beating in there. (interview, 9/21, year 2)

Similarly in the Japanese unit she used Sound of Waves, which she termed a perfect book for "total integration of curriculum" (interview, 11/2, year 2).

Besides integrating within the cultural units, Emily also connected units, largely through the conversations about literary patterns that were discussed earlier. She explicitly addressed this in discussing her connection of Sound of Waves and Romeo and Juliet:

> I think you could do a lot more of [comparing cultures] in a higher grade. It is 9th grade and I think it is difficult to do that. You can set up some frameworks that they can take with them and apply to anything they see and that is what I do all along. So if I've done the analysis they now have that. If I'm looking at an orphan tale I can say to them does this remind us of anything, what pattern is there. I'll take the hero concept then I'll take a heroine concept, but I'll do it in pieces. I'd have to spend so much time establishing the framework in the beginning I'd never get into the cultures, so what I've done is for each

of the cultures I've put another framework in place so they could go back. And for anyone that would be a nice project to do. (interview, 11/2, year 2)

It is this "framework in place" that formed the center of the domain and provided the integrated structure. With such an approach to her curriculum, students' knowledge and understanding developed cumulatively throughout the year, as they revisited important issues and concepts from new perspectives and with broader frames of reference.

Tony Harrison: Moving Beyond Sequence in American Literature

Tony Harrison's tenth-grade American Literature course was a one-semester survey from the Puritans to 1930; it was followed by a second semester of British literature from Beowulf to the Victorians. This course was one in which both the structure and the content were in transition. We studied it over a two-year period, and, with Tony's help, also traced some of the previous history of the course. It is particularly interesting as an example of how content, domain structure, and discussion conventions interact.

The departmental syllabus for the course was quite traditional, emphasizing text-centered content. The first goal, for example, was to have students "trace the development of the English language within the heritage of British and American literature and grasp the scope and purpose for it." Other goals sought to have students recognize literary forms, recognize literary genres, identify figures of speech, distinguish literary devices, and recognize symbolism. Only one goal could be described as somewhat reader-centered: "The student will grasp the universality of good literature and note its application to problems of people today."

Tony subscribed to many of these departmental goals, though he was uncomfortable with all the emphasis on "classic" literature: "I want kids to get the scope of American literature, but that is changing," he noted. In particular, Tony was concerned to bring more ethnic literature into his curriculum, in the process of which the scope of the traditional American literary canon had to be broadened. Although he questioned the canon, Tony was initially more comfortable with the text-centered goals of the departmental syllabus: "I want them to get analytical skills, to be able to identify the author's techniques, to learn the techniques of storytelling" (interview, 11/21, year 1). As the course progressed, however, Tony was to become less comfortable with these goals as well.

Tony's initial conflict with the departmental syllabus arose over the choice of literature to read. As written, the syllabus called for the reading of a traditional canon in chronological order. The syllabus began with Puritan writers like Bradstreet and Edwards, moved to Hawthorne and Melville, and then to Twain, Crane, Wharton, Fitzgerald, and Steinbeck. In practice, the course was initially organized into five units, each unit anchored by a novel: The Scarlet Letter, Billy Budd, The Red Badge of Courage, Huckleberry Finn, and The Great Gatsby. In early efforts to respond to multicultural issues, Billy Budd was replaced with I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Huckleberry Finn was dropped because of concerns about some of its themes, and an introductory unit on Native American literature was added.

Although the course organization by novel allowed for some collateral reading of shorter pieces, Tony found the scheme confining, especially with his growing sense of the importance of ethnic authors:

> I wanted to get away from the concentration on the novel. I wanted to get greater variety, so I deemphasized the novel [to] get more things into the curriculum. Novels take too much time. The problem with multicultural is how do you add all the things you could, and in order to do it you need to add a lot. Something has to go, so I cut down on the novels. (interview, 11/21, year 1)

These changes added slightly more breadth to the curriculum, but the multicultural material remained as relatively isolated additions, rather than as an integral part of the course.

Over the two years that Tony participated in our study, he struggled with the problem of how to broaden the curriculum further. During the first year, he reformulated his units by reducing the emphasis on novels, adding a great deal of new multicultural material, and organizing the selections around "clash of cultures." His emphasis, however, remained heavily on traditional methods of textual analysis rather than on the "clash of cultures" that provided the overt structuring principle.

By the second year of the study, he had taken his reformulation further, and was beginning to think of the course as an exploration of the nature of the canon itself. As he put it in an interview at the beginning of the second year, this was largely in response to his own

> desire to understand who chooses the literature, that is the impetus in the back of my mind that started this whole thing. That is where the objective has changed to make it

more multicultural. There is going to be an attempt to redefine American literature. (interview, 9/14, year 2)

As he said in an interview one week later:

> I want them to have experience with a broader range of lit. I would like them to get to know the real American lit., not just the lit of European males. (interview, 9/21, year 2)

In the first few days of the semester, Tony introduced the idea of redefining the canon to the students:

> I've had them think of what American literature has meant to them. We talked about what is considered to be the classic American literature pattern, that in fact Applebee's research has had a lot to do with this-- what schools are teaching. We talked a little bit about classic American literature and how we will deal with it this year. (interview 9/21, year 2)

Two months later, in November, while passing out photocopied sets of additional material, Tony told the students that "in our quest to read different things" these pieces would give them a different picture of American Literature.

The structure of this course was basically episodic, with 6 units organized by time period. As Tony described them then they were:

> Beginnings of literature, which is the Native American literature. Then we'll talk about the clash of cultures in the second one. Then the colonial period. Early and late 19th century which is pre and post civil war. Then an early 20th century period that takes us up through the Harlem Renaissance. Loose time periods but within those time periods is a tremendous amount. (interview, 9/14, year 2)

It is interesting to note that most of the units function as time periods in a simple chronological structure, but the first and second units--beginnings of literature and clash of cultures--carry explicit ties to the conversational domain and introduce the idea of an episodic structure in which important issues are revisited.

The episodic nature of the structure is more clearly seen when we consider the ethnic strands in this curriculum. To see how this worked at its best, we can look at the strand of African American literature across the units of the semester. Slavery was the glue that bound the African American strand of literature. In the unit on the colonial period, students read Voices of Columbus (a play), a piece on indentured servancy, and reproductions of the slave laws of Virginia. Topics of discussion with these texts included Columbus as exploiter, indentured servancy as a precursor of slavery, and slaves as property. "I use the piece [on Columbus] to set up the European attitude on slavery. They had no problem in using natives as slaves," Tony explained (interview, 10/5, year 2). In the next unit, students read Jefferson's "Effects of Slavery" and Mercy Otis Warren's "Petition on Slavery." Topics here included the horrors of slavery and abolition.

Those two units built to the concentration of African American literature in the pre-Civil War unit: Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, "A Slave Picks Cotton," "Sociology for the South," "The Hunters of Men" and "The Farewell". Topics here focused on how it felt to be a slave; the effects of slavery on the slave; and the effects of slavery on the master. Subsequent units picked up the effects of slavery in a post-emancipation America. In the late-19th-century period, students read the poems of Paul Lawrence Dunbar, the autobiography of Frederick Douglass, and a short story by Charles Chesnutt. Discussion focused on racism and the place of African Americans in 19th century society. The Chesnutt story, "The Wife of His Youth," is a particularly poignant story about an African American who can "pass" for white confronted by his dark-skinned slave wife from whom he was separated during slavery. Tony and the class focused on the clash of cultures and the predicament of being a light-skinned African American caught between cultures.

In the final units, students read short stories by Jean Toomer and Maya Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings as further discussions of the lingering effects of slavery and the current effects of racism. Indeed, Tony focused class discussion of I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings on several incidents in the novel that echoed the conditions of slavery: Angelou's discussion of piece work in cotton picking as indentured servancy and the changing of servants' names as in slavery. Interestingly, Tony even pulled literature by white authors into discussions of the African American strands. For example, he used The Great Gatsby as his bridge into the unit on the Harlem Renaissance. Although he dealt in class with the symbolism in the novel (a holdover from earlier versions of the course), Tony also focused in class discussions on the character of Tom Buchanan as emblematic of racist attitudes in the 1920s.

The African American strand was the most developed in its weaving throughout the course. Tony's Native American strand was also fairly well developed, tying in explicitly with the clash of cultures conversation that ran through the course. Strands of Hispanic literature and literature by women were less developed, though Tony hoped eventually to develop them further and to add even more strands, dealing with topics such as Jewish literature and the literatures of Eastern Europe.

As Tony rethought the structure and content of his course, he found it necessary to reconstruct the conventions governing discussion. In his first explorations, he added a variety of new texts but discussion continued to focus upon literary analysis. During the second year, Tony shifted the discussion much more clearly into the new domain suggested by the structure, focusing on the conflicting cultures and ideas during each historical period.

There were some holdovers from the earlier conversations even in the second year, however, and these are instructive. With both The Scarlet Letter and The Great Gatsby, Tony continued to emphasize the analyses of structure and symbolism that he had used in the past. The result was that students felt the disjuncture between how these books were treated and the issues that dominated the rest of the course--and they rejected them (even though both books had been class favorites in previous years). As one student wrote, "The Scarlet Letter turned me off almost completely; the language was incomprehensible...." Another concurred: "I found the Scarlet Letter to be rather boring." A student who liked The Scarlet Letter did so for reasons that seem extraneous to the course's main conversations: "The Scarlet Letter was beneficial to me because I learned to read for symbolism."

The Interaction of Domain Structure and Discussion Conventions in Tony's Class

When Tony began teaching the American literature course, his emphasis was very text-based; classroom activities focused on clarifying plot and analyzing literary technique, almost always through whole class discussion. Burroughs (in process), in an analysis of one of Tony's lessons on The Scarlet Letter, shows how Tony used "summary" questions about the "facts" of a story to subtly mold the students' interpretations of the texts, even when they were not intended to do so, much as Marshall (1989) found with a different groups of teachers. These analyses point to a rather closed discussion and a predetermined sense of where the discussion should lead.

These emphases began to change during the first year that we studied his classroom, and the change accelerated during the second year. In particular, as real issues began to emerge as topics for discussion, students began to be given a more active role.

Part of the change was an opening up of the discussion. We can see this opening up in several ways. For example, even during the first year Tony used a roleplaying activity as a culmination to one of his units on Native Americans and New Arrivals. The activity offered students five scenarios in which they were to place themselves as "characters." Some students were Native Americans, some Puritans, some the actual characters from The Scarlet Letter. Students were to roleplay their characters within the outlines of the scenarios. Students came "dressed" in character, consisting of a costume or simply a sign hung around their necks announcing their characters.

Tony reported that the conflict of ideas could be seen in the acting out of characters in this scenario. "None of the student-Native Americans reacted to the fact of the Puritan community growing and spreading out on the land," Tony said, pointing out that this was consistent with the Native American's communal philosophy of land ownership. Native Americans did not feel the encroachment of settlers because the Indians had a different understanding of "land" than Europeans did. Tony was pleased that "The students were able to take the Indian point of view" (interview, 10/21, year 1).

Early in the second year, Tony assigned a take-home essay in which students were to tell an important family story. In an interview (10/5, year 2), he said that he planned to take a day's class time to have students volunteer to read their stories aloud. He emphasized that

> it is important to hear and share the voices of who we are.... That fits into the Native American experience and also understanding the European voices that were here. We talked about Ann Bradstreet in the context of women's writings being ignored and African American writers being suppressed. So if we are doing this [reading] this [writing] is part of our hearing all the voices. Important to hear all the multicultural voices in the class.

In the same interview, Tony went on to talk about the students' stories as an indication of "the extraordinary richness of the traditions in this class."

As the semester evolved, Tony began to find other ways to begin to give students voice in the class. One way was in regard to class scheduling. Midway through the semester, as the

structure began to break down, Tony created a detailed calendar that would schedule reading, writing, discussion, vocabulary, and tests for the rest of the semester. When he finished he offered students an opportunity to help him plan the next semester curriculum. Only about six students took him up on the suggestion, but he took their suggestions seriously.

Another attempt at voice-giving was Tony's institution of student reports on reading. He started this initially to deal with the problem of too much material. Each student would become an "expert" in one text as a way of helping to cover the reading. In an interview (12/7, year 2) he stressed, "I want them to comment on the assignment. Anything they want to say about it. But not to get into a retelling of the tale...." Later in the semester (1/5, year 2) Tony said the reports allowed the discussion to play off of what the student thought was important. Indeed, the next week (1/14, year 2), a student's reaction to a passage in I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings sparked a heated discussion in which students took sides. But old habits die hard. Even in these student reactions, Tony directed the discussions toward topics he wanted to pursue. After a report on passages of The Great Gatsby, for example, Tony began to ask the student presenter about color symbolism, a topic that the student had not raised.

In the final analysis, the openness or closedness of the discussion was a problem because of the structural changes that Tony had made to the curriculum. The new curricular structure seemed to demand a new way of talking with and about students, leading Tony toward more open discussion in his day-to-day activities as well.

Summary: Domain Structure

An earlier report from this project (Applebee, 1993) described a variety of curriculum structures that differ in the relationships that exist among the elements of the domain, and also in their ability to sustain extended conversation about the subject matter. These included catalogs (with no cumulative structure); collections (where elements form a "set," such as Great Books or Modes of Discourse; sequences (where elements are ordered by, for example, time or perceived difficulty); episodic (where ordered elements also relate to a central idea or focus); and integrated (where the parts are interrelated so that the curriculum invites continuing reconstrual not only of what has just been introduced, but, in light of new ideas, everything that has come before).

In the present study, the teachers drew upon different organizing structures for different parts of the domain, with skill instruction tending to have the least apparent structure and literature tending to have the most. Even in literature, however, the curricula we observed

ranged from little more than a catalog of grade-appropriate novels, read as they became available in the book room, to the carefully planned integration of Emily French's World Cultures course.

The dominant structures observed in the literature portion of the curriculum in each of the case study classes are summarized in Table 3. Taken as a whole, Table 3 highlights the relative lack of larger organizing structures in the literature curricula of even these very accomplished teachers. Rather than domain structure, many of these classes relied upon domain conventions domain to provide a sense of coherence and continuity.

Conclusion

This study focused on accomplished teachers of English, all of whom created a sense of continuity and coherence within the English curriculum. In analyzing the features of their classrooms that contributed to the sense of coherence, the present report has highlighted two sets of contributing mechanisms: one set had to do with the establishment of a set of conventions governing discussions of the domain of literature, the other had to do with the structure that was perceived within that domain. The establishment of a consistent set of conventions for what was appropriate to discuss and how discussion would be carried out seemed the critical first step in creating a sense of coherence and purpose within the literature classrooms we studied. Coherence in this sense seemed to be the primary criterion for a sense of accomplished teaching, and it existed in all of the classrooms we studied. Over the course of a semester or year, this sense of a stable set of conventions for discussing the domain--a sense both of how discussion would be orchestrated and of what kinds of comments would be appropriate--gave the teachers and students alike a sense of purpose and direction. They came to know what to expect, and that alone was enough to make the curriculum seem coherent.

Our analyses of domain structure, however, suggested that there is another layer of coherence and, particularly, a sense of direction that was established within some but not all of the classes we studied. This sense of direction stemmed primarily from the interrelatedness of elements within a larger conversational domain. In the most fully structured curricula, which we have described here as *integrated*, experiences that came later in the curriculum were not only informed by ones that came earlier, but also led to a rethinking and reshaping of earlier experiences. This kind of curriculum was rare in the classrooms studied here, and would

Table 3. Dominant Curriculum Structures in the Case Study Classes

Class	Teacher	Grade	Topic	Structure
			Riverhill High School	
1	Harrison	10	Survey of American literature	episodic
2	Harrison	10	Survey of British literature	sequential
3	Harrison	10	Survey of American literature	episodic, moving toward integration
4	Harrison	10	Survey of British literature	sequential
5	Harrison	9	Sampler of genres	catalog
6	Harrison	9	Sampleer of genres	catalog
7	James	11/12	Survey of Western literature	sequential, tending toward episodic
8	James	12	Sampler of major works	collection (of themes)
9	Callahan	11/12	Survey of British literature	sequential
10	Callahan	11/12	Survey of contemporary literature	catalog, tending toward collection (of issues)
11	French	9	Introduction to world literature	integrated
			Lexington High School	
12	Williams	9	Sampler of contemporary novels, Shakespeare, Asian and African literature	catalog
13	Williams	9	Sampler of contemporary young adult novels	catalog
14	Hutchinson	9	Survey of 20th century American literature	sequence (of thematic complexity)
15	Hutchinson	10	Survey of British and American literature	sequence (chronology)
16	Hutchinson	10	Sampler of British and American literature	catalog
17	Hutchinson	12	Sampler of 20th century British and American literature	collection (of issues)
18	Grant/ Morrison	9	Sampler of contemporary adolescent literature	catalog
19	Grant	9	Survey of Western literature	sequence (chronology), tending toward episodic

probably be rarer still in a random sample of teachers from the nation at large.[2] The benefits of such curricula seemed real, however, in terms of the depth of discussion that they provoked and the enthusiasm exhibited by both teachers and students.

Teachers varied from class to class in the extent to which they planned their curriculum around relationships within a larger conversational domain (stretching through a semester or year, and perhaps into a universe of discourse beyond the classroom), and students varied within classes in the extent they reconstrued such domain structures for themselves. (In some cases where the teacher's planning was relatively unstructured, students created a more integrated conversational domain through their own discussion and attempts to make sense.) In the most integrated curricula examined in the present study--Emily French's World Cultures course for ninth graders, and Tony Harrison's evolving introduction to American Literature at grade 10--one important factor was clearly the teachers' own knowledge of ongoing conversations within the larger domains of literary or cultural studies. This was not the only factor, however, as teachers' knowledge of their subject was also high for many of the other, less integrated curricula that we examined.

What did seem to be critical in creating a more integrated course was a sense of legitimately unresolved but important issues being debated within a larger conversational domain into which students were being asked to enter. In the more integrated of the courses in the present study, these issues had a distinct social/political cast, raising questions about the roles of race, gender, and ethnicity within the fabric of American life and culture. Such questions are certainly central ones at the moment, both within the academy and in society at large. The controversy such issues generate elicits opinions and stimulates interest among the students. Other conversations that echo through many high school and college literature courses have lost whatever life they once had, at least in the ways they were reflected in classrooms in the present study: questions of historical continuity, of the relationships between meaning and form in a text, and even of the moral values that an author may seem to convey have lost their power to stimulate real debate and have become instead simply other sets of content to be transmitted. However lively the larger conversations about these issues may once have been, they have lost their focus and originality, as well as their power to organize curricula effectively in the classrooms we studied.

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[2] Previous Literature Center sponsored studies indicate that most instruction is organized around individual major works, and that the literature anthologies that provide the basic materials for literature instruction make few connections among the works that are studied (Applebee, 1993).

The choice of conversational domain had consequences that echoed through all aspects of curriculum development. This was particularly evident in classes in transition between conversations, as in Tony Harrison's American Literature course. Here, issues of the quality and relatedness of works chosen for study were in a real sense determined by the domain that was established. Thus, Hotel, the first novel written by an African American, became an appropriate work to study as the conversation began to give significant consideration to slavery and its consequences, including its effects on literacy. Conversely, The Scarlet Letter and The Great Gatsby lost their places in the new conversation, when Tony relied on old routines instead of reconstruing the discussions he encouraged about these works. The point is a general one, however: Material as diverse as comic books, rap songs, King Lear, and Beloved will be appropriate or not depending upon the conversational domain that is established and maintained in a particular course--rather than because of their place on a list of grade-appropriate content or their significance as elements of cultural literacy.

In the present study, students' engagement was highest and their perceived understanding of the domain was greatest when domain structure and discussion conventions worked together to support students' entry into significant conversations about interesting issues. In these conversations, students had room to develop their own interpretations and to enter into open dialogue and debate with others. Such conversations required both time and material to sustain them: time to explore and elaborate upon newly formed ideas, and material to allow independent exploration. Too little time--(as happened when Tony's new one-semester multicultural American literature curriculum burgeoned to 84 works)--curtailed discussion just as much as too little material--(as when Claudia's British literature course relied on single "typical" examples to illustrate particular literary periods).

Whatever conversations we may decide we want our students to enter into, curricula conceived in these terms will look very different from traditional scope and sequence charts, and will require consideration of a different set of issues during curriculum planning and review. They will also force us to think more carefully about the links between the ways we teach--including the conventions we establish for discussion--and the conversational domains that we establish for our courses to explore. As the issues within the domain become more important, and the answers less clearly predetermined, it becomes more and more likely that the curricular conversations that result will also be open, inviting real dialogue, thoughtful comment, and independent exploration. Such issues, we believe, are more in keeping with those that have driven recent reforms in instruction in the English language arts--and offer the possibility of a reunification of curriculum and instruction within a more effective constructivist pedagogy.

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Appendix 1

Questions on the Student Interview Schedule

Overall Impressions

What different kinds of things do you do in this class?
(e.g., reading, writing, films)

Which of these seems most important?

Which of these seems least important?

How are activities related to one another?

What do you like best about this class?

What do you like least?

How is the class different from last year's class?

Literature Selections

What were some of the things you read early in the year?

More recently?

Did you study these separately or were they grouped in some way? If grouped, how and why?

What connections, if any, were there between books you read?

How was the reading organized?

What do you think you will study next in this class? Why?

What Counts as "Knowing" Literature

What kinds of things did you do in class when you studied [title]?

What kinds of questions did the teacher ask?

What kinds of discussions did the class have about it?

What kinds of tests did you have on it?

What does it take to do well in class?

How does your teacher decide grades? What matters most in giving grades?

Writing about Literature

Tell me about [specific writing assignment]. What did you say in this paper?

Do you think that is what your teacher wanted you to say?

Literature Study and Grades

How important are each of the following to your teacher in deciding grades in studying literature? Rate each as either very important, somewhat important, or not very important.

Understanding what happens in what you read
Spelling, grammar, punctuation in what you write
Making a good argument to support what you say
Being creative
Understanding what the author meant
Having your own ideas
Understanding literary terms like simile and metaphor

Miscellaneous

Imagine you could change what would be studied in your class. What would you change?

What would you keep?

What is your favorite subject in school? Why?

What is your least favorite subject? Why?